

WILD WEST

WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES ETC. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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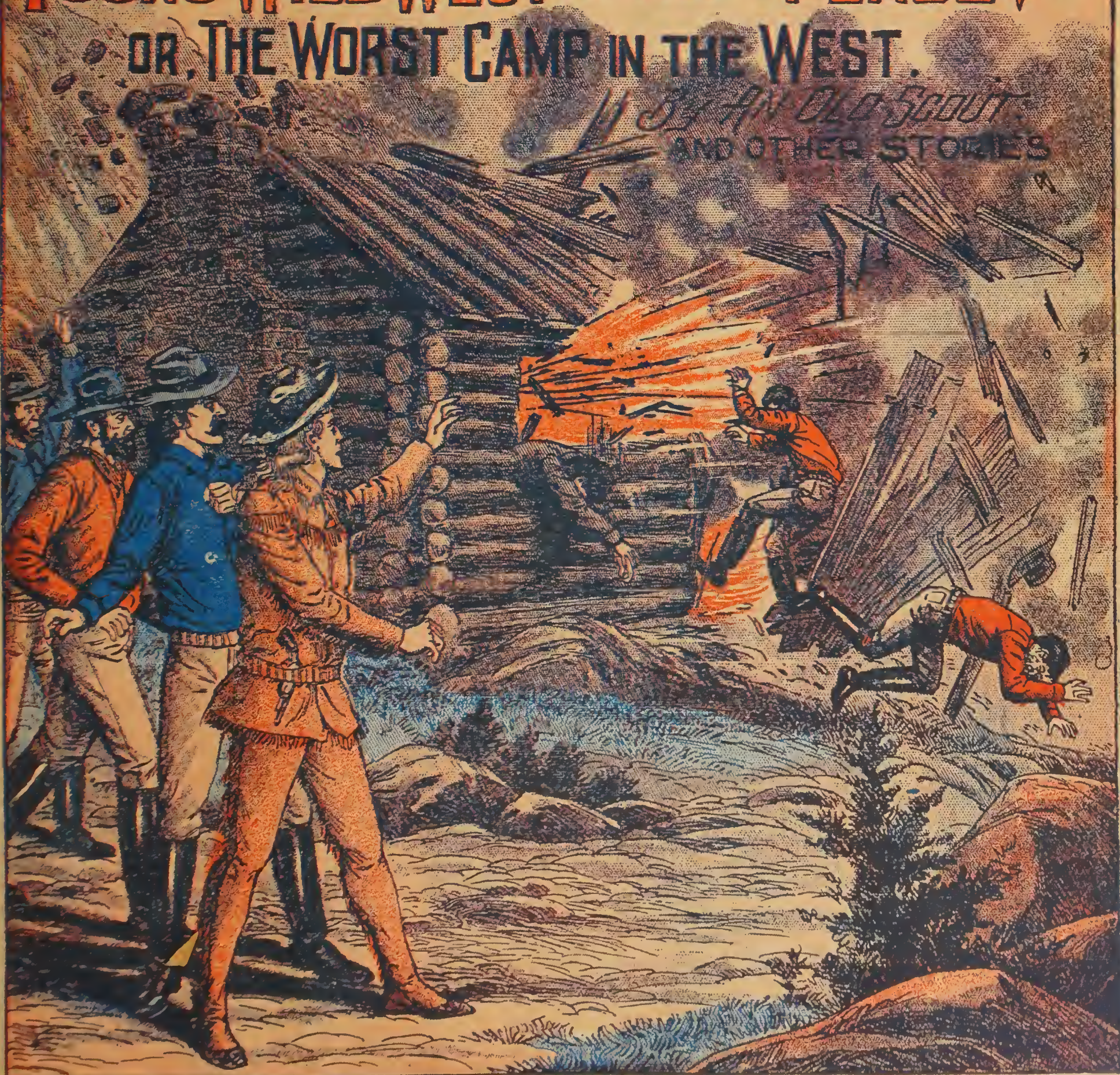
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NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 2, 1917.

Price SIX Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST AT THE "JUMPING OFF" PLACE; OR, THE WORST CAMP IN THE WEST.

BY AN OLD SCOUT
AND OTHER STORIES



"Look!" shouted Wild. A terrific explosion sounded in the hut. A shower of debris flew up in the air, and several of the outlaws were blown out of the building. The men with Wild were nearly hurled down by the shock.

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A Magazine Containing Stories, Sketches, Etc., of Western Life

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YOUNG WILD WEST AT THE "JUMPING OFF" PLACE

—OR—

THE WORST CAMP IN THE WEST

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

THE "BOSS OF THE BAD MEN" IS CALLED.

"Hold up your heads, every one of yer! I'm somethin' what ain't ter be sneezed at! When I coughs it thunders, an' when I winks my eye somethin' drops! I'm Gil Gilter, ther Boss Bad Man of ther Jumpin'-off Place, which is ther worst camp in ther West! Don't no one cross me, now; if you do there'll be a drag-out scene in less than forty seconds!"

The speaker was a raw-boned, muscular-looking man of thirty. He had on a red shirt, corduroy breeches and high-topped leather boots, while a slouch hat with a rather broad brim adorned a head that was plentifully supplied with coarse hair of a reddish tinge.

He had just stepped into a barroom in a little mining town in southern Wyoming, and when the words came from his lips in such a boisterous way every man in the place looked up.

"That's right," nodded the stranger; "hold up your heads. A man what can't hold up his head ain't worth ther powder it would take ter blow his front teeth out! Everybody have a drink with ther Boss of ther Bad Men of ther Jumpin'-off Place!"

There was an assorted set of individuals gathered in the barroom of the shanty hotel. There were miners, cowboys, hunters, prospectors and gamblers.

Some were old and some were young, but they all fixed their eyes on the man who had introduced himself as Gil Gilter.

Probably the youngest two there were standing near the end of the counter with a tall, straight man with long black hair and a mustache of the same hue.

Both the boys and the man wore neat-fitting buckskin hunting-suits which were trimmed rather gaudily with scarlet fringe, and as they were all good-looking and fearless in appearance, they seemed to be just a peg above the rank and file in the saloon.

One of the boys was really handsome. Though full-grown and developed into a perfect athlete, the expression on his face was that of a boy who was afraid of nothing and was ready to stick to the truth, no matter what the cost might be.

He had a wealth of chestnut hair hanging over his shoulders, and one look into his clear, dark eyes would have told the ordinary observer that he was one who could be trusted to the very limit of life itself.

There was a cool and easy, not to say pleasant way about him, as he looked up when the stranger told all hands to hold their heads up.

As the crowd rushed up to accept the invitation to drink with the Boss Bad Man of Jumping-off Place the three stepped back to give them a chance.

Gil Gilter was not slow to notice this.

"What's ther matter, there?" he roared. "You three galoots ain't afraid of gittin' mashed in ther rush, are yer? I'll see to it that you don't git hurt, young fellers. Ther tall galoot is big enough ter look out for himself. Landlord, jest see to it that them two youngsters has ther pizen first. Jest fill their glasses to ther brim, too."

The man in charge shot a glance at the boys, and then turning to the bad man, said:

"I reckon ther young fellers don't want anything strong ter drink. I heard one of 'em say they never touched tanglefoot when they come in here a few minutes afore you arrived."

"Don't touch tanglefoot, hey? Well, that's what I calls funny! Well, never mind! If they ain't never touched it afore they'll do it now. They'll drink tanglefoot with ther Boss Bad Man, jest because he wants 'em to. Jest fill up two glasses—quick!"

The man drew a big Colt's six-shooter as he spoke and swung it around so the muzzle pointed at the man behind the counter.

"Don't pour any whisky out for us!" exclaimed the boy with the long chestnut hair, taking a step forward as the landlord was in the act of filling a glass. "If the Bad Man from the Jumping-off Place insists on treating us we'll take a cigar apiece and call it square."

Gil Gilter was astounded.

Half drunk as he was and being used to having things his own way, he could not understand the situation at first.

But he had given the order for the two glasses to be filled for the young fellows, and when he recovered he called out to the barkeeper:

"Fill them glasses!"

"All right," was the reply; "I'll fill 'em, but I can't make them young fellers drink if they don't want ter."

"But I kin, though!"

"See here, my friend!" said the dashing-looking young fellow with the chestnut hair hanging over his shoulders, "you are wasting a whole lot of breath, and you are keeping the crowd waiting to wet their throats, besides. Now, just take it easy and let every one have what he wants on you. That's the way to be nice, you know."

"That's ther way ter be nice, is it?" cried the bad man. "Why, I'm Gil Gilter, I told yer, an' I'm always nice. There ain't a nicer man living than me!"

"Well, go ahead and treat those who want whisky, and leave us out, then."

"I won't leave you out! You've got ter drink! You've got ter drink—do yer heart what I say?"

"I hear you. But don't get all riled up; take it easy. I am not going to drink anything I don't want, nor neither is my friend here. You just haul in your horns, now; take my advice."

"Take your advice, did yer say? Why, you young tater sprout! I'll jam my shooter down your throat an' shoot your lungs full of holes!"

The fellow made a move as though he really meant to stick his six-shooter in the boy's mouth, but he received a surprise.

A quick hand struck his wrist a sharp blow and the weapon went to the floor.

Then a fist shot out and caught him squarely in the mouth, and he went back against the counter of the saloon with such force that the glasses on it jingled.

"We will settle this thing right now!" exclaimed the boy, keeping as cool as an iceberg, after striking the bad man. "I don't want any one to interfere. This is strictly my quarrel, let every one remember that. I will make the Boss Bad Man of the Jumping-off Place understand that he can't always have everything his own way, even if I am only a boy!"

The bad man was coughing and spitting out blood now, and no wonder! Two of his front teeth had been knocked loose.

But if there ever was a real mad fellow it was he!

He gathered himself together and leaped for the handsome young athlete, evidently with the sole intention of wiping him out of existence right then and there.

But he surely made the mistake of his life.

The dashing young fellow with the flowing chestnut hair very neatly avoided the rush made at him, and then with a lightning-like blow, caught Gil Gilter on the chin and sent him staggering back to the counter.

"I have an idea that I can whip a mule-wagon full of such bluffers as you," said the boy calmly. "You had better leave me alone if you don't want to get hurt."

Gil Gilter reached for the revolver that protruded from the holster on his left side.

He meant to shoot!

His hand caught hold of the weapon and he got it from the holster.

Crack!

A sharp report rang out, and then every man in the place realized that the boy had shot the revolver from the bad man's hands with such remarkable quickness that the act had fairly dazzled them.

Thud!

The weapon struck the floor and lay within three feet of its mate.

Gilter's fingers had been grazed by the bullet, and he placed them in his bleeding mouth and executed a few steps of a dance.

"Howlin' catamounts!" he yelled. "What have I struck? Wake me up, somebody! I've got a nightmare!"

"Oh! you are not awake, eh?" and then the boy reached over and picked over one of the glasses that had been filled with whisky by the landlord. "Here, take this! I am going to wake you up!"

The muzzle of the revolver that had spoken with such wonderful results but half a minute before was leveled right at his heart, so the bad man did not hesitate to take the glass.

He was going to place it to his mouth, for he felt that he really needed the drink just then, but he was checked.

"Hold the glass over your head and say, 'Here's good luck to everybody!'" called out the boy.

It was wonderful to see how quickly the bad man lifted that glass.

"Here's good luck to everybody!" he said rather meekly, but loud enough for every one to hear.

Crack!

The glass was shattered in fragments and the contents and some of the broken pieces fell upon his head and shoulders.

The boy had fired a second shot, and his aim was as true as a die.

A murmur of surprise and admiration went up from the crowd.

"Gentlemen," said the young fellow, brushing back his long hair and smiling at the inmates of the saloon, "I guess the bad man has got enough. I hardly think he will insist on me drinking something I don't want. What do you think about it?"

A chorus of assenting voices answered him, and then the tall man with the long black hair added:

"I reckon ther measly coyote has learned somethin'. He may be ther boss of ther bad men, but if he is, I reckon

ther rest of his gang at ther Jumpin'-off Place must be a lot of lame prairie dogs what's never seen anything livelier than a hog race!"

Gil Gilter remained perfectly silent for the space of a full minute.

Then he turned to the landlord and said:

"I reckon we'll all have something. Mine is whisky."

"Mine is a cigar!" spoke up the boy, smiling as though it had only been a little rehearsal that they had been going through.

"Take what yer like!" exclaimed the bad man. "I ain't no hog, an' I know when I've got enough."

The keeper of the saloon was very busy the next five minutes.

He put out the tanglefoot, as the men called it, and every one save the two boys drank.

They calmly lighted their cigars and waited to see what the next move on the part of the bad man would be.

He paid the bill, and then turning to the boy who had given him the surprise of his life, said:

"I reckon you don't have any 'jections ter tellin' who yer are, young man?"

"Oh, certainly not," was the reply. "My name is Young Wild West."

Several of the inmates of the room looked at each other and nodded.

It was evident that they had heard the name before.

"So you are Young Wild West, hey?" asked the bad man, looking as though he was very glad the trouble was over. "I reckon I've heard of yer. You're a sort of a hurricane, you are, an' no mistake! You're ther first thing on two legs that ever give me ther call, an' I give yer credit fur it. I'm Gil Gilter, ther boss of ther Bad Men of ther Jumpin'-off Place, but I cave when it comes ter makin' you take tanglefoot! You kin mark it down in your book that you've called Gil Gilter good an' hard, an' that you've knocked two or three of his front teeth loose. But please stick it somewhere in your noodle that ther Boss of ther Bad Men never furgits a thing! I'll meet yer some other time, an' then maybe you won't have it so easy!"

"Well, Mr. Gilter, if you are not satisfied I will go outside with you and we will have it out any way you may suggest," was the cool rejoinder. "If you feel that an undertaker ought to take charge of you right away, I am just the fellow to make the job ready for him."

There was a silence then for the space of several seconds.

"Hooray fur Young Wild West!" suddenly a big miner bawled, taking off his hat and swinging it over his head.

Then a cheer went up that made the rafters of the shanty saloon quiver.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said the boy, bowing to them. "Now I will introduce you to my partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart. We are on our way to the Jumping-off Place just to see what the Worst Camp in the West is like. We stopped here for a short rest, and I am more than glad that we were fortunate enough to meet a representative of the place we are bound for. All hands have cigars!"

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE "JUMPING-OFF PLACE."

Young Wild West, known to a great many as the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Deadshot of the West, was, as he had stated in the saloon, on his way to the place that had the reputation of being the "Worst Camp in the West."

With him were his two partners in business and pleasure, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart.

Cheyenne Charlie was an ex-government scout and Indian fighter, and Jim Dart was a boy who had been a chum of our hero for a long time.

They all three loved excitement and adventure, and they were ever on the lookout to do a good turn to those deserving it.

A Denver newspaper had published a stirring article about the camp that was called the Jumping-off Place, and when Young Wild West read it he made up his mind to pay it a visit.

At Cheyenne he had managed to get a pretty good idea where the camp was, so when he arrived at the little mining town with his two partners, and the man who called himself the "Boss Bad Man of the Jumping-off Place" showed up in all his glory, he was more than pleased.

"You're a dandy, an' no mistake!" said the big miner who had proposed the cheer. "You an' your pards jest step up an' have another cigar with me, won't yer?"

"Certainly!" was the reply. "Cigars are things that will keep. They come in handy to light in camp after supper is over."

The miner did not treat the rest.

He was probably one of the few who did not believe in throwing his money away too recklessly.

Young Wild West had considerable money with him, so he felt that it was no more than right to ask the crowd.

He did so, and they all responded, even to Gil Gilter.

"Take what you like, gentlemen," said the boy. "I don't drink whisky myself, but I never tell any one they mustn't drink it."

"That's ther difference between you an' ther Boss Bad Man," spoke up the tall partner with the long black hair and mustache.

"That's right, Charlie."

"You don't care what a feller takes when you stand treat, but he tries ter make everybody drink ther same as he does."

"Well, he didn't make me, did you, Gil Gilter?" and he turned to the bad man.

"No, that's right, Young Wild West," was the reply.

Gil Gilter must have come to the conclusion that it was no place for him, for he went out a few minutes later, and, taking his broncho by the head, walked across the street to another shanty where "Whiskee, Sergaars & Lodgings" were sold, according to the rude sign that ran across the front over the door.

"Gentlemen," said Young Wild West, addressing everybody present, "we haven't been around this way in quite some time. This camp is a new one to us. What is the name of it?"

"This are Forkover," answered the big miner. "It are jest thirty miles north of ther Jumpin'-off Place."

"Ah! We rode down from Cheyenne, and we were a little surprised to run across the camp here. The last time we were down this way there was nothing that looked like a mining camp here."

"Well, we're only about three months old, yer know."

"I see."

"An' we're hustling things," spoke up the man who owned the shanty. "We've got quite a decent class of men here, too."

"Forkover is not like the Jumping-off Place, then?"

"You bet your life it ain't! There's very few galoots in ther Jumpin'-off Place what ain't wanted by sheriffs, I reckon. It jest seems that all ther bad men of ther West have drifted to that camp, an' that they're goin' to make a sort of fort out of it an' keep out any as they don't want there."

"That makes it all the more interesting, boys," said Young Wild West, turning to his two partners.

"That's what!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "But if Gil Gilter is ther Boss Bad Man of that camp, I reckon ther others don't amount to much."

"That feller would do a whole lot if he was let go," spoke up the big miner. "But Young Wild West wouldn't let him go! Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody laughed then, as the big miner was quite a leader in the camp.

"I guess we'll stay over night with you if it is agreeable," our hero said, addressing the landlord. "Then we will strike out the first thing in the morning for the Worst Camp in the West."

"All right!" was the reply. "I reckon you'll be suited with what yer git ter eat here. We ain't got no hotel like what yer might find in Cheyenne, but we have good grub an' a clean place ter sleep fur our guests."

"That's all we could wish for. We are used to roughing it, you know, and when we strike a camp where there's no accommodations that we like to be had, we just pitch our camp, the same as we do when we are on the trail."

It was pretty close to supper-time, so when their horses had been put away our three friends washed up and sat in the rear room of the so-called hotel and waited.

It so happened that there were no other guests there just then, and it was not long before the Chinese cook had the meal ready.

It was a pretty good one, too, and they were well satisfied.

They saw no more of the bad man that night, and the

next morning they ate a hearty breakfast and then started for the Jumping-off Place.

As it was only thirty miles, they took it along comparatively easy, so they would arrive there around noon.

The trail led through broken country that was up and down, rocky and sandy, with here and there a stretch of heavy timber.

High peaks of the Rockies loomed up on almost every hand, and as they were right at the top of a vast table-land the air was rarified and pure.

They rode for twenty miles without coming to a halt.

Then they came upon the wheel-ruts made by a heavy wagon.

The ground being soft there, they could easily distinguish the prints of horses' hoofs and also the marks of oxen.

"There has been quite a little party that's went this way," Cheyenne Charlie observed. "They've struck ther trail that leads to ther Jumpin'-off Place, too, though it ain't likely that they know that they're headin' for ther Worst Camp in ther West."

"No; it is hardly likely that they do know that," answered our hero. "These tracks are so fresh-looking that I doubt if it has been more than an hour since that wagon passed this way. We'll give the horses a little blow, and then we will strike out after them. It is quite likely that there are women and children in the party, and if the camp is as bad as they say it is, it might not be safe for them there."

"That's right," spoke up Jim Dart. "We had better get a hustle on us, I think. I've got it in my head that there is going to be something for us to do pretty soon."

They were just thinking of starting to follow the wagon trail when they heard a horseman riding up behind them.

They turned, and then the next minute they saw Gil Gilter coming.

The villain had no doubt started from the mining camp after they did, but he had been riding harder, and had thus overtaken them.

The bad man did not appear at all surprised when he saw who were ahead of him.

"How are yer, boys?" he called out, as he slowed his horse down to a wlk. "So we meet ag'in, do we?"

"It seems so, Gilter," Wild retorted. "I suppose you are on your way back to the worst camp in the West?"

"That's jest what I am, Young Wild West!" the villain exclaimed. "If that's where you fellers is bound I don't mind tellin' yer that yer had better not go there. You'd better steer clear of ther Jumpin'-off Place. We call it that 'cause it's ther last place on earth. Ther very next station is Death!"

"Then the camp is where a fellow jumps off the earth, is it?" Wild said, with a laugh.

"That's it exactly."

"Well, that is just the place I want to see, then. I had no idea that we were so near the end of the earth. I did not think it was located in this part of the world, anyway."

"You'll find that it is, Young Wild West."

"We will see about that."

"Any one as comes there an' don't do jest as he's told by me an' my pards—which, by the way, owns an' runs ther camp ther way we want ter—will have ter jump off or go back to where he comes from without his horse an' what money he had with him."

Young Wild West smiled at the way the man talked.

"I'll tell you something for your own benefit, Gil Gilter," he said. "We are going to pay a visit to your camp and we are going to mind our own business and not interfere with any one, so long as no one interferes with us. Now, then, you take my advice and not try to fool with either me or my partners. If you do you will jump off the earth so quick that it will make your head swim!"

"I like ther way yer talk, boy," replied the bad man. "You're a regular windmill, you are!"

"Never mind about what I am! I guess you know me well enough to think that I mean what I say."

"All right. But jest remember that I ain't goin' ter take your advice. You won't take mine, so I won't take yours."

"Look out for yourself, then!"

"You bet I will! I'll post ther boys about yer, an' don't yer furgit it! They'll be ready fur yer when yer come. Good-mornin'."

With that he rode on ahead.

"I guess we'd better keep close to that fellow," said Wild to his partners. "He is what I call a peculiar man. He is plainly afraid of me, yet he thinks he is going to get the best of us in the end. The Boss Bad Man of the Jumping-off Place is making a big mistake, I think."

"I'm sartin of it!" Cheyenne Charlie declared.

They rode on at a smart pace, keeping about a couple of hundred yards behind Gil Gilter.

In this way five miles were covered.

There was only five more to go, and then they would reach the camp that had the reputation of being the worst in the West.

Young Wild West did not really believe this, and if it was, he meant to take it upon himself to make it as good as the average before he left it.

He was not afraid of being killed by the villains who were running things their own way there.

His coolness and wonderful nerve would carry him through, he felt certain.

They rode along for perhaps a mile farther.

Then they suddenly heard voices ahead of them.

The next minute they rounded a curve and saw a party of horsemen and a big covered wagon at a halt.

One of the horsemen was Gil Gilter.

The bad man was talking earnestly to a grizzled old man in a ragged buckskin and corduroy suit.

Our three friends rode right up and came to a halt.

"There they are!" exclaimed the bad man, pointing them out. "I've got ther best of reasons ter believe that they're robbers. Jest look out fur 'em!"

Two or three men of the dozen in the party raised their rifles threateningly.

"Don't be alarmed!" called out Wild. "That man is a liar! We don't look like robbers, do we?"

"I reckon yer don't!" exclaimed the old man, nodding emphatically.

"That fellow don't like us," went on our hero, as he leveled his revolver at the head of Gil Gilter. "I've a strong notion to give him what he deserves!"

A startled scream came from the wagon just then, and the heads of two women came in view from the front.

One was a woman of forty and the other must have been considerably less than twenty.

She was a comely-looking girl, too, and had evidently been reared in the West.

"They are not robbers, grandpa!" she exclaimed. "I can tell by the looks of them. See! the expression of the man's face shows that he has told what is not true!"

Gil Gilter certainly did look guilty just then.

He was frightened also, for when he found that the men did not open fire on our friends, as he no doubt expected they would do, it occurred to him that his time on earth was mighty short.

But Young Wild West did not mean to shoot him.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed, in a ringing voice. "I will give you just ten seconds to get out of sight! Off with you, now!"

Then something happened that surprised the band of emigrants, for such they were.

The bad man wheeled his horse around and headed for the Jumping-off Place as fast as his horse could run.

Then our friends rode up, and, with a smiling face, Young Wild West told the party who they were and what sort of man Gil Gilter was.

"I knowed it!" exclaimed the grizzled old fellow, who was plainly the leader. "I put that feller down right away as bein' a bad one. You folks is welcome ter jine our party if yer like."

"Where are you heading for?" asked our hero.

"Boulder County, Colorado," was the reply.

"Well, you are just now pretty close to the Worst Camp in the West, and the man who just left here is the leading villain there. But don't get alarmed; we'll see to it that you are not interfered with."

CHAPTER III.

OUR FRIENDS ARRIVE AT THE WORST CAMP IN THE WEST.

A talk with the leader of the party of travelers gave Young Wild West and his partners the information that they were on their way from Cheyenne to Boulder, and that they expected to locate at the latter named place.

The old man gave his name as Silas Okeson, and with him were his widowed daughter, Mrs. Hope, and her daughter, Amelia, who was scarcely eighteen years of age.

The rest of the party consisted of young men who were in some way related to Silas Okeson.

They had started out to better their fortunes, leaving their wives and sweethearts behind until they got settled.

Mrs. Hope and her daughter had insisted on coming with the outfit, however, and they had had very good luck so far.

It did not take Young Wild West long to see that there was a young man in the party who was very much attached to the girl, and the feeling was mutual.

That was probably why she had insisted on being one of the party.

Her lover, whose name was Edward Lane, was a step-grandson of the old guide, but that made him no relation to her whatever.

Wild and his partners soon got acquainted with all of them.

Silas Okeson seemed a little bit worried when he heard that there was such a bad town so close by.

"I wouldn't care fur ther rest of us if it wasn't that ther galoots might go ter harmin' my darter an' her gal. I did want ter stop somewhere to-day, too. We need salt an' a few little things."

"Well, we are going right to the Jumping-off Place, as they call it," answered our hero. "I guess you can get what you want there, and then you can continue on your way."

"All right, Young Wild West, I'll leave it ter you. Get ther outfit on ther move!"

A whip cracked and the oxen started off.

It was a slow way to travel, and our friends were glad that they were so close to their destination.

They continued on their way, and in due time they came in sight of a camp that was composed of tents and rude shanties.

"I guess that is the Jumping-off Place," said Wild, pointing it out. "It doesn't look to be any worse than any other camp, does it?"

"No!" answered Jim Dart. "And I guess it isn't as bad as what they say, either."

"I reckon we won't have no very great trouble with them fellers," Cheyenne Charlie spoke up. "If Gil Gilter is a sample of what's here we needn't worry any."

The little mining place was situated in a hollow on the banks of a wide, shallow creek.

It was certainly a fine place for a thriving mining camp, anyhow.

The trail leading into the little valley ran through a short defile which was no wider than to permit for horsemen to ride abreast.

As Young Wild West came through this with old Silas Okeson at his side he noticed a rude sign that was nailed to a tree almost directly in front of the entrance, or natural gateway.

The daring young deadshot halted before the sign and read the following inscription aloud:

LOOK OUT, STRANGER!

This is the Jumping-off Place, so if you don't think as we do you will have to get off the Earth!

By order of the committee.

(Signed) GIL GILTER,
Boss of the Bad Men.

"Well, that is what I call pretty good!" exclaimed our hero, with a laugh. "This sign has just been made, for the paint on it is not dry yet. Gil Gilter is trying to give us a good scare, I guess. There is one nail that keeps the sign to the tree, as you can see. I guess I will drive it in and let the sign drop!"

Out came his revolver, and, taking quick aim, he pressed the trigger.

Crack!

Another bullet struck the same spot and the sign wobbled.

Crack!

Down came the sign this time, the nail having been driven far enough in to let go.

"There!" exclaimed Young Wild West, as he threw out the empty shells and calmly put new ones in the cylinder of his six-shooter. "I guess Gil Gilter will have to put the sign up again if he really wants it there."

A murmur of admiration went up from the band of emigrants.

It was not on account of what Wild said, but because of his accurate shooting.

"That beats anything I ever seen done with a shooter!" declared Silas Okeson.

"Oh, there is nothing wonderful about that," answered the boy. "It is easy enough to hit a nail-head at that distance. Almost any good shot could do it."

"Yes, almost any good shot could do it," said Edward Lane. "But he's got to be a mighty good shot, I reckon. How many is there what kin do it?"

"Well, I know two, anyhow. And the chances are that you could if you tried real hard."

"Oh, I might hit a nail-head if I fired at it two or three times. But you done it so easy-like; that's what gits ther best of me."

At this juncture half a dozen rough-looking men came hurrying from the heart of the camp.

Wild noticed that Gil Gilter was one of them, but he was not in the lead.

"What's all ther shootin' about?" asked a stout fellow with one eye, as he halted within a few feet of the party.

"Oh, the shooting was not done to hurt anybody, stranger," Wild answered coolly.

"Well, what was it done fur, anyhow?" came the question.

"Yes! What was yer shootin' at, Young Wild West?" spoke up Gilter, stepping forward and putting on an air of importance.

"Well, we saw the sign you had nailed to the tree, and I undertook to send the nail in a little farther," answered our hero. "I sent it in so far that the sign dropped to the ground. There it is lying there, face down."

The men looked surprised.

"What did you shoot the sign down fur?" demanded the boss, after a pause.

"Oh, just for fun. That is no kind of sign to have at the entrance to a pretty little valley like this is. If you really want to make out that it is such a bad camp it would be a good idea for you to hang yourself to the limb of that tree on which the sign was nailed. Your dangling carcass would let folks know what sort of a place it was then and they might turn away unless they were just such people as you are."

This was said so coolly that the companions of Gil Gilter could not understand it all.

They looked at Wild, and then turned their eyes upon their leader.

"I reckon ther boy is ther one what oughter hang to ther limb as a sort of a sign, ain't he, Gil?" said the stout man with the single eye.

"I reckon that's right, Gaff!" was the reply.

"Well, we ain't goin' ter allow ther Jumpin'-off Place ter lose its reputation, so we'd better make short work of ther young galoot."

The villains acted as though they were getting ready for business.

There were just six of them, and they appeared as though they were going to do just as they pleased, in spite of the fact that the strangers outnumbered them more than two to one.

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Young Wild West, as one of them started to unwind a lariat from his waist.

"There ain't goin' ter be no holdin' on about it!" retorted the one-eyed man. "We're jest goin' ter hang you to that limb up there, an' if ther rest of your gang ain't turned away from ther camp by ther time you go up they'll have ter jine our crowd, or else jump off ther earth!"

"That's what!" added Gil Gilter.

Young Wild West's face wore a calm smile.

But the eyes of Cheyenne Charlie were dancing with anger by this time.

The scout was itching to get at the men.

But he knew the ways of Wild pretty well, so he restrained himself.

He knew something would happen pretty soon.

"Jest put your hands behind yer, so I kin tie 'em, young feller!" said Gaff, taking a step forward with the rope.

"You just drop that rope, or I'll drop you!"

The command rang out clear and distinct, and as quick as a flash Young Wild West jerked a revolver from his belt and covered the man.

At the same instant Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart covered the rest of the gang, but more particularly Gil Gilter.

As Silas Okeson and his men were ready to put up a fight, they also drew their weapons.

The one-eyed man let the rope drop.

Young Wild West was master of the situation!

"I guess Gil Gilter did not tell you what sort of a fellow I was," he said coolly. "If he had told you I hardly think you would have undertook to come up to me for the purpose of tying my hands behind my back preparatory to hanging me. Now, you fellows just make tracks back to the camp and see to it that you behave yourselves. If you don't behave something will happen!"

"Come on, boys!" spoke up Gilter at this juncture. "Our turn will come later on. Let Young Wild West have his own way fur a while an' see where he fetches up."

"But they can't come inter ther camp unless they swear that they'll stick to us, an' do jest as ther committee of ten tells 'em!" spoke up one of the men.

"Oh, yes, we can!" said Wild. "Now just do as I told you or I'll begin trimming your whiskers with bullets!"

The six ruffians turned and walked from the spot.

"We'll follow up our advantage," said Wild to the old man in charge of the band of travelers. "Come on!"

He was the only one who had dismounted, and he was in the saddle in a twinkling and riding after the six bad men. Charlie and Jim were right after him.

Silas Okeson gave the word for the rest to follow, and then the party entered the Worst Camp in the West and came to a halt in a little clearing almost in the very heart of it.

The majority of the population, which was all male and numbered perhaps forty, was at work on the claims scattered about, but Gilter and the other five men had halted in front of a shanty which had a rough sign across the front declaring it to be a place to buy "Liquor and Tobacco."

They were talking with a bare-headed man, who was evidently the proprietor of the saloon, and as the little cavalcade came up and halted within twenty-five yards of the shanty, four others came out and looked on.

Right near where the halt was made there was a store, and it was this that Okeson and his people wanted to visit as soon as possible.

"Go and buy what you want right away," said Young Wild West. "I will go over and see what the bad men have got to say. Come on, boys!"

The last remark was addressed to his partners, and then the whole three rode over and dismounted near the gathering of bad men.

"How are you, gents?" said our hero, as he looked them over. "I am sorry that your boss has made such a mistake. But probably he is sorry for it, and has made up his mind to let it go as it is."

"I ain't made no mistake, Young Wild West!" spoke up Gil Gilter. "You'll find that out afore yer have been here very long, too! You wouldn't take my advice an' keep away from here, so you'll have ter take what comes!"

"Well, I am ready to take it whenever you get ready to give it to me. But just remember one thing! The very moment you attempt to draw a shooter on me you will die. You are a marked man, Gil Gilter!"

"See here!" spoke up the man with the bare head. "Don't you know that this are ther Worst Camp in ther West? An' don't yer know that here's where ther ones what's too good ter live jumps off ther earth?"

"Well, that won't interfere with us, then. We are not too good to live."

"Well, I reckon it will be a case of jump off or light out with yer afore to-morrer mornin'. You hear what I say?"

"Oh, we hear you, all right. But let me ask you a question. Do you fellows own this camp?"

"I reckon we do, don't we, boys?"

"It's mighty funny if we don't!" spoke up Gilter.

"Have you got papers to show that you own the camp?"

"That's none of your business, young feller."

"Oh, yes, it is. When you say a thing, and I don't believe it, it is my business to find out. Now just prove that you fellows own all the land around here and we'll get out right away. If you don't prove it we'll stay till we get good and ready to go!"

CHAPTER IV.

TWENTY MINUTES TO GET OUT OF THE TOWN.

As bad as the men claimed to be, none of them offered to draw a shooter as Young Wild West talked to them in such plain language.

On the other hand, some of them seemed to really admire his coolness.

There is hardly a person living who does not admire courage and daring, even if it comes from some one they dislike.

The very look on the face of the dashing young dead-shot as he talked convinced the lawless men that he was not bluffing.

But they could not bring themselves to understand how it was that he dared to beard the lion in his den, so to speak.

"Young feller, I reckon you're jest as full of grit as an egg is full of meat," observed the one-eyed man, nodding his head. "But you don't know what you're doin'. Ain't it got all over ther land that ther Jumpin'-off Place is ther worst camp in ther West? How in thunder is a gang like yours goin' ter change things here? Why! it would take a regiment of soldiers ter make us do any different from ther way we want ter. We own ther blamed old camp, an' we ain't goin' ter have anybody here what disagrees with us. But I feel sorter sorry fur yer fur one, an' as a member of ther Committee of Ten, I make a motion that yer be given twenty minutes ter git out of ther camp—you an' them what's with yer."

"Does any one second that motion?" cried Gil Gilter, speaking in a relieved tone of voice.

"I second it!" said the keeper of the shanty saloon. "I think Gaff is about right in this here matter."

"All right, then, as chairman of ther committee, I'll put ther question. Are yer ready fur it?"

"Yes!" came the retort from nearly every one present.

"All in favor of givin' Young Wild West an' his gang twenty minutes ter git out of ther camp will please say aye."

"Aye!"

Not one of them missed joining in the chorus.

"Contrary, no."

There was a deep silence.

A smile played about the lips of our hero.

"I am much obliged to you for your kind consideration," he said. "But the fact is, that all of us don't want to get out of the camp. I came over with my partners expressly to see what the Jumping-off Place was like, and we don't want to get out of it so soon."

"We're goin' on as soon as we git a few things at ther store," called out Silas Okeson.

"Well, you've got jest twenty minutes," answered Gilter, and then he turned and walked into the saloon.

"Come, boys! We'll have a drink," he said, and then all hands filed into the place.

Wild walked over to the store, his two partners following.

The man who kept the place did not seem to be such a bad fellow, and our hero made up his mind that he was only linked in with the villainous gang because he had to be in order to do business there.

"We're goin' ter go on fur Boulder, Young Wild West," said Silas Okeson. "I reckon it's ther best thing we kin do. There's no need of us in stayin' here an' gittin' in trouble. We've got wimmen with us, yer know."

"That's right. Go ahead. But we will stay just because these fellows don't want us to. We came here to see what the worst camp was like, you know, and we haven't really found out yet."

"Well, I reckon you'll come out all right. You know how to handle 'em, I kin see that."

The party soon got what they wanted from the store.

Then they started away from the town and took the trail southward.

As they disappeared from view Wild went in the store.

"See here!" he said to the proprietor. "What kind of a place is this, anyhow? Is it really the Jumping-off Place?"

"That's what they call it," was the evasive reply.

"Well, the fellow who calls himself the Boss of the Bad Men has given us twenty minutes to get away from here; what do you think will happen if we don't go?"

"I wouldn't want to be one of you," was the reply, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"They are dangerous, then?"

"Yes; there ain't no mistake about that. The men here are a bad lot, an' no mistake!"

"But you don't seem to be a bad sort of a fellow; how is it that you stay here?"

"Oh, I was one of the first here, and I saw that if I didn't hang in with the gang it would be no use. There ain't so very many here in the camp, but the business is pretty good. I get the price I ask for my goods, and I am making money."

"There have been a good many innocent people shot here, I understand?"

"I don't know," and the storekeeper shook his head.

"And there is a whole lot of land around here that don't belong to the ones who claim to own it?" went on Wild.

"I've got nothin' to say," answered the man. "I'm here, an' I pull in with the gang, that's all. It's best to pull in with 'em, too, if you want to stay here."

"Then you believe that might makes right?"

"No, I don't. But what's ther use of believin' anything but 'every one for himself?' That's the only way to get along nowadays."

"What is your name, please?"

"Reuben Jones is my name."

"Well, Mr. Jones, I can't exactly agree with you. But I must say that you've got an eye for business. You don't know me, I suppose?"

"No; but I seen enough of you over there in front of the saloon to know that you're a good one. You've got a tough time ahead of you if you stay here longer than the time they give you to get away in. They don't shoot down folks, as a rule, but hang them. There's a ledge over there behind them trees, an' there's a big tree growing up from it. On that tree there's a limb with a stout rope dangling from it. More than one man has jumped off that ledge with a noose around his neck."

"Ah! So that is the real jumping-off place, then?"

"I guess that is what gave the camp its name."

"I see."

"So they hang people here, hey?" remarked Cheyenne Charlie. "Well, you kin jest bet that there won't be no more of it done—not if ther man is innercent."

"That's right, Charlie," nodded Jim Dart.

"You fellows seem to think that you will have an easy time of it with the Committee of Ten," said the storekeeper.

"Well, I guess they won't hang us, anyhow," retorted Wild. "They won't say anything to us if we are here when the twenty minutes is up, either."

He looked at his watch.

There were eight minutes left to them.

"Boys," he said, "I guess we'll go over near the tree where so much hanging has been done and camp there. It will be as good a place as any, and it will be handy in case the villains do make up their minds to hang us."

Reuben Jones looked at the boy with admiring eyes.

"I never seen a man as cool as you are," he declared. "I wouldn't be surprised if you win out."

"Well, if we do happen to jump off the earth you can rest assured that there will be a few less bad men here when it happens."

The three now went out.

Their horses were standing where they had left them, and, mounting them, they rode off.

They had scarcely done this when half a dozen horsemen left the rear of the shanty saloon and headed for the trail Silas Okeson and his party had taken.

Young Wild West and his partners did not see them, but kept right on until they came in sight of the big tree on the ledge that had a rope hanging from a limb.

It was less than a hundred yards from the nearest shanty, and as the stream flowed right along below the ledge, it was a convenient camping-place.

"I guess this will do," our hero observed, as he dismounted. "It looks as though there might be some pay-dirt here, too."

"I reckon it's a putty rich place around here, anyhow," retorted Charlie, as he cast a critical eye over the scene.

"Well, if we camp here we ought to fix up some sort of a cover in case the bad men take a notion to open fire on us," said Jim.

"That is the first thing to be done," Wild declared. "There are five trees right along in a row, and they are not more than three feet apart, too. Let's roll up these boulders

between them and then we'll have a regular breastworks in short order. With the cliff at our back and the ledge over our heads, I guess we'll stand a pretty good show of not being picked off."

There were plenty of boulders such as they would need, and under their united efforts they soon had them in place.

Their horses were tethered on the grassy bank of the stream under the shade of the trees, and then they decided that it would be in order to have something to eat.

Jim Dart acted as cook, and while Wild and Charlie kept a watch and made some additional touches on their stronghold, he started a fire and began to cook coffee, bacon and bear steak.

They had shot plenty of game on the way over, some of which had been dried or salted for use when it was not convenient or wise to make a fire.

Jim knew how to cook a meal pretty well, and the best of it was that he did not mind doing it.

Wild had an idea that when the smoke from their fire was seen by the bad men they would come over that way, so he kept a sharp lookout.

But none of them showed up, and they ate their noon-day meal without being disturbed.

It was not long after they had finished their dinner when they saw four horsemen approaching.

One of them wore the uniform of a lieutenant in the army and the others were in ordinary riding-suits.

They were coming over the trail that entered the Jumping-off Place from the west, and thus they would have to pass the camp of our three friends before they reached the heart of the camp.

When they saw the three standing about the smouldering fire they rode up at a quicker pace and halted on the bank of the stream, which our friends had crossed in order to locate where they were.

"Hello, friends!" said the lieutenant. "What is the name of this camp?"

"The Jumping-off Place is what they call it, I believe," our hero answered.

"Do you folks belong here?"

"No. We just got here an hour ago."

"Ah!"

The lieutenant dismounted and his companions followed suit.

"May I ask you who and what you are?" the officer asked in a rather polite way.

"Certainly," Wild answered. "I am Young Wild West, and these two gentlemen are my partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart."

"Is that so? I have heard of you. You are well known at Fort Laramie, I guess?"

"Well, yes, pretty well known."

"And your partners, too. I have heard of them, as well. You have acted as scouts for the army on several occasions."

"That is right," answered Wild.

"I am Lieutenant Kenny, and these gentlemen are Messrs. Jackson, Orth and Helt."

Then, lowering his voice, the officer added:

"They are government land agents, and we have come here to straighten things out in the Worst Camp in the West."

Wild and his partners shook hands with the newcomers. They were glad to meet them, especially as they had come on such an errand.

Not that they felt they would need their services in the way of any protection to them, but they felt pleased that the government had taken hold of the case.

"When the newspapers begin to give accounts like they have it is time an investigation was made," said Jackson, who was really the head of the three land agents. "According to all accounts, men have been murdered and their property claimed by the murderers."

"Well, I wouldn't be surprised if you found that was right," Wild answered. "There is the limb above us that a whole lot of innocent men have been hanged to, so the storekeeper informs us. They were made to jump off the ledge up there after the noose was placed about their necks."

"Did you come here to investigate the case, Young Wild West?" Lieutenant Kenny asked.

"Well, we came just because we heard that it was the worst camp in the West. We wanted to see what it was like."

"Well, are you satisfied that it is the worst?"

"In one way—yes. But I think the men, for the most part, are a lot of bluffers. They are villains, no doubt, but when it comes to the point few of them would stand up and take their medicine."

"Were they hostile when you came in the camp?"

"Well, they gave us just twenty minutes to get out or else be hanged!"

"How long ago was that?"

"Over half an hour."

"An' we ain't hung yet!" spoke up Charlie, smiling grimly.

CHAPTER V.

GIL GILTER PLAYS A LOVE GAME.

We will follow Gil Gilter and the men who went with him, when they left the rear of the shanty saloon and rode away on their horses.

The Boss of the Bad Men had decided to make a raid on the party of travelers who had left but a short time before.

The fact was that the villainous leader had taken a fancy to Amelia Hope, the pretty grand-daughter of Silas Okeson.

Though he feared Young Wild West and his partners, he was not discouraged in his evil ways.

He proposed that they go and steal the girl from the wagon train as soon as our hero and his partners went from the front of the saloon after being given twenty minutes to get out of the camp.

Though some of the men did not like the idea of bothering with women, none of them felt like going against the wishes openly of the boss.

Those who had their horses there were selected to go, and then a messenger was sent to the various claims around to notify a dozen more men to be ready when the rest came along.

"We may as well have a bigger force than they've got," said Gilter. "Then if it comes to a fight we'll have a better show. I don't want ter hurt any of ther gang; I jest want ter git that gal. I've got an idea that she'd make a fine wife fur me."

As the villains rode away so that Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart could not see their departure, they felt that they were going to add fresh laurels to the reputation they had gained since they had been running the camp to suit themselves.

They picked up eleven horsemen by the time they got to the little pass the trail ran through, and once out upon the path made by the big ox-wagon they quickened their pace so as to soon catch up with the travelers.

"What are yer goin' ter do with ther gal when yer git her, Gil," asked Gaff, the one-eyed man.

"I'm goin' ter take her ter ther log cabin we took possession of after ther old hunter died so sudden," was the reply.

"Good! I reckon that's about as good a place as any. It's a little outside of ther camp, an' that'll make it all ther better ter keep any one from findin' her."

"Findin' her!" echoed Gilter. "Who would be apt ter find her—or even look fur her?"

"Young Wild West might."

"Young Wild West, hey? Well, I reckon Young Wild West will be out of ther land of ther livin' afore we've got ther gal very long. As soon as we git back from this trip we must settle him an' his pards. If we can't make 'em jump off ther earth we'll do it with bullets. It won't take much of a rush on 'em ter lay 'em low, if we can't git a chance at 'em when they don't see us."

"No," and Gaff shrugged his shoulders; "it won't take but three shots, providin' they're sent in ther right direction."

The villains kept on following the trail made by the ox-wagon, and gradually gained upon the travelers.

They overtook them about four miles out from the camp. They did not ride up to them and start a fight, but halted and held a consultation before they were seen by the unsuspecting emigrants.

It was decided that the men who had not been seen yet by Silas Okeson and his companions should ride on ahead and join them in a friendly way.

These were the villains who were working on their claims when the party arrived at the Jumping-off Place.

"Jest tell 'em you're on ther way ter Boulder," said Gilter, as they were ready to start off. "They'll be glad

ter see yer, I'll bet. Then watch fur a chance ter git ther gal an' ride off. Fix it so ther one what has her is behind ther rest when yer make a dash this way. Then they won't dare ter shoot. It will be easy enough."

Though the villains did not think it was going to be so easy, they set out for the travelers.

There were eleven of them, and they felt that if it came to a fight they would have no more than an equal chance until Gilter and the rest joined them.

But there was not one of them who wanted to have a fight.

They wanted to get the young lady without shedding any blood if they could.

Okeson and his followers did not see them until they were within three hundred yards.

Then there were signs of uneasiness among the party.

Quite naturally they thought it was a gang of the bad men from the camp after them.

They were right, of course, but when the villains rode up and stated they were bound for Boulder, and that they had avoided the Worst Camp in the West and kept straight on, even Silas Okeson was deceived.

It fell to the lot of a fellow called Hoke to act as leader of the detachment, and he, being quite a talker, soon had things working nicely.

Just before the scoundrels had reached the travelers Amelia Hope had left the wagon, where she had been riding with her mother, and mounted one of the bronchos belonging to the party.

It is quite likely she wanted to have a chat with her lover, Edward Lane.

Anyhow, she was riding at his side when the eleven men rode up and joined the party.

None of them appeared to notice the girl at first, but when they had made arrangements to ride along with the travelers to Boulder they gradually fell back to the rear, where the young couple happened to be riding.

The man called Hoke decided that the time now had come to make the attempt to steal the girl.

In a whisper he said to one of the villains with him:

"You jest give ther young feller a clip on ther side of ther head with ther butt of your shooters an' then I'll grab ther gal an' light out like sixty! Every man of yer must ride like anything an' git ahead of me. Now's ther time, Jule!"

Jule was a very active sort of a fellow.

He turned his horse over toward the young man and rode up to him.

Then he deliberately struck him a blow that sent him from the saddle to the ground.

At the same instant Hoke caught Amelia Hope about the waist and wheeled his horse around.

"Light out, boys!" he called out.

A scream came from the lips of the girl, and then as her friends looked around they saw her being carried away at a swift gallop.

Consternation seized the followers of Silas Okeson.

They had not anticipated anything like that.

But the old man quickly called out for them to give pursuit, and away went all but two of them, who remained to take charge of the outfit and look after Mrs. Hope.

Old man Okeson was a very good shot.

When he realized that the men were scoundrels and that they had struck Lane senseless to the ground and carried off his grand-daughter, he unslung his rifle.

Crack!

He fired and brought one of them to the ground.

Hoke saw the man fall within a few feet of him.

He knew he had been shot dead, too.

"Boys, they've started ther shootin'!" he exclaimed; "so give it to 'em!"

Then rifles began cracking rapidly.

Two of the pursuers were wounded in short order, and then no more shots came from them.

"They're afraid of hittin' ther gal," said Hoke. "It's too bad they didn't think that way afore that first shot was fired, for we've lost a good man."

At this juncture Gil Gilter and the rest of the gang showed up.

Yelling at the top of their voices, they rode to meet their companions.

As they met, Gilter took the girl from Hoke and led the way back to the Jumping-off Place.

They outdistanced their pursuers, and soon were in a dense woods through which the trail ran.

About a mile from the narrow entrance to the little valley they turned off to the left, following a route that was over a rough, rocky plateau.

The prints of their horses' hoofs did not show here, and they were confident that they would throw the pursuing men off their track.

"I reckon that's what might be called a great game!" exclaimed Gil Gilter, as he finished tying a handkerchief about the girl's face so she could not scream. He had already buckled a strap about her body, pinning her arms to her sides.

"It was done putty good, I reckon," answered Hoke. "But we had ter go an' lose a man, though."

"Who was it that went under?" the leader asked.

"Ther feller what called himself Danny," was the reply.

"Well, it can't be helped. Danny's time had come, I s'pose, so there's no use in grievin' over it. A man always dies when his time comes. What's ter be will be, an' yer can't make me think no different."

No one vouchsafed a reply to this.

But it was plain that the villains felt quite sore over the sudden death of their companion.

It was the first man they had lost since the Committee of Ten took charge of the camp.

The villains had brought their steeds to a slow walk now, for they were confident that their pursuers would keep right on the trail, thinking that they had gone direct to the camp.

And this is just what happened.

That gave Gil Gilter and his men all the chance they wanted.

In a few minutes they reached a little clearing on the side of the mountain, in the center of which stood a log cabin of pretty good size.

This was the place the villainous leader of the bad men had selected to imprison the girl in until he got her consent to become his bride.

The door of the cabin was locked by a padlock, and, dismounting, Gil Gilter permitted his captive to stand on the ground while he produced a key and opened the door.

"Here's where your home is ter be, gal," he said, trying to appear kind and polite. "It ain't ther best place in ther world, but I reckon you'll sorter git used ter it. I'm ter be your husband, yer know."

At this Amelia Hope nearly choked in an effort to say something.

But her brutal captor only smiled.

The interior of the cabin was of two apartments and a low loft overhead.

There was just enough furniture of the rudest sort in it to give it what might be termed a home-like appearance.

"Hoke," said the leader, as he forced the girl to enter the cabin, "I'm goin' ter leave you here in charge of ther putty gal fur a while. Jest remember that she's ter have one room all to herself! You ain't ter say a word to her, either, unless it is ter answer a question she asks. I'll go over to ther camp with ther boys, an' some time this afternoon I'll come over with an Injun squaw, who will take charge of her then."

"All right," answered Hoke.

Then Gilter conducted Amelia to one of the rooms that had no windows.

Two loopholes admitted light enough for her to see that it was a prison sound and secure.

As the villain removed the gag from her mouth the girl looked at him with flashing eyes and exclaimed:

"You will be sorry for this, you cowardly scoundrel!"

"Will I?" was the retort. "Well, I hope I won't. There ain't no use in yer worryin', or gittin' mad. All's fair in love an' war, they say. I've jest fell heels over head in love with yer, an' I took what I thought was ther easiest way ter win yer. It'll all come out right in ther end, an' you'll be happy with ther man what loves yer so much that he jest stole yer away."

"I'll die before I become your wife, you miserable wretch!" the spirited girl retorted.

She had lived long enough in that section of the country to be brave and quite able to take her own part, providing she had anything like a show.

If she had been possessed of a weapon just then it would surely have gone hard with the villain.

But she realized that it would be useless to put up a fight or try to make her escape just then.

She must wait and take her chances.

She had great confidence in her lover, and though she had seen him felled from his horse, she was quite sure that he had not been killed.

It was certain that he would do his utmost to save her.

Gil Gilter did not banter many words with her, but as soon as he had removed the belt from about her body, so she could have the use of her hands, he left the room, closing the door.

"There you are, Hoke!" he exclaimed. "Now it remains for you to see that the gal don't leave that room."

"You kin bet that she won't git out—not as long as I'm let live!" was the reply.

Then Gil Gilter and the rest of the gang set out for the camp, to be ready to meet the pursuing party and also to put an end to Young Wild West and his partners.

CHAPTER VI.

WILD STARTS THE BALL ROLLING.

Lieutenant Kenny and the land agents looked at our friends in silent admiration when the scout told them that they had not been hanged yet.

"I hardly think they will hang us, either," observed Young Wild West. "I am quite sure I was not born to be hanged."

"Well, they are desperate men, so I understand," said the lieutenant, "and there's no telling what they might do if they got the chance."

"Oh, you are right on that. If they got the chance! But we don't mean to let them get the chance."

"You don't look as though you were much afraid," ventured Orth.

"Well, I am about the way I look, then."

"I wonder how they will treat us when they find out our business here?" Jackson ventured with an uneasy shrug of his shoulders.

"They won't like it, you can bet!" exclaimed our hero, with a laugh. "The men here have no use for honest folks, and when it comes to those who have come here for making an investigation of how they got the land they hold I think they will be apt to raise a row."

"You gents has all got shooters, I s'pose?" Cheyenne Charlie remarked.

"Oh, yes."

"An' you know how to use 'em?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's all right, then. From what I've seen of the measly coyotes they don't hanker after bein' shot at. They have a kinder mania, I believe you call it, for hanging' folks, but they don't much like to git shot at."

The lieutenant was a brave man and also possessed of a great deal of determination.

"We came here to do business, gentlemen," he observed, turning to his three companions. "The sooner we get at it the better. I hardly think these men dare to make an open war against an officer of the army."

"I guess you are right on that point," spoke up Wild. "It is hardly likely that they will come out openly at first. But you can make up your mind that they will try their best to make you jump off the earth, the same as they will with us. Now, there are seven of us, and if we are not able to tame these fellows down I am very much mistaken. I hope we don't have to do any shooting, but I am afraid we will. If it comes to it, just take good aid and drop the man you want to shoot at."

"You are the Champion Deadshot of the West, so it wouldn't be any trouble for you to pick off any one of them you pleased," responded the lieutenant.

"Oh, I'll come pretty near to hitting what I shoot at, whether it is a button on one of their coats or the center of a forehead."

"I know you will. I have heard all about you. Now, the question is, will you go over to the saloon with us?"

"Certainly. We are going to pitch our camp here, but that will be all right. We can come back again. We will take our horses with us, for the chances are that some of the villains are watching us at this very minute, and if we left them here they would probably take charge of them in a hurry, and possibly kill or injure them. I have a horse that all the money in this country could not buy.

"The sorrel over there, I presume," answered the lieutenant.

"Yes, Spitfire is a great beast. He knows more than some men, I believe. At any rate, I will never part with him if I can help it. He has pulled me out of many tight places, and he has never found his match in speed."

Wild went and got the horse and threw the saddle upon his back.

Charlie and Jim did the same with theirs, and then all hands mounted and rode over toward the saloon.

There was not a man to be seen hanging around the place, and there was much silence about it.

But the door was open, so that showed that the saloon was ready and waiting for business.

On the other side of the narrow, crooked street of the mining camp the store-keeper sat by the door, he, too, waiting for business.

"Looks rather dull around the Worst Camp in the West, I should say," the lieutenant observed.

"Yes," answered our hero. "I wonder what has become of the gang that was here when we left?"

It was not until they halted in front of the shanty saloon that any one came out.

Then the proprietor showed up, followed by three of the men who did not own horses.

They had been playing cards in the saloon, and when they heard the sound of horses' hoof they thought their friends were coming back.

But what was their surprise to see four strangers with our hero and his partners, and one of them an army officer, too!"

The lieutenant greeted the men in a respectful way, and then turning to those with him, said:

"Come! Let's have a drink."

Then all hands dismounted and followed the proprietor into the place.

The three rascals standing there looked at Wild and his partners rather gingerly, but said nothing.

"Have something, gentlemen," said the lieutenant, beckoning to them.

They accepted the invitation readily.

It proved that the man had nothing but whisky to sell, so Wild and Jim did not take anything.

He had no cigars, either, but said he expected to have some the following week.

"So this is what they call the Jumping-off Place, is it?" remarked the lieutenant, as he paid the bill.

"That's what she is!" replied the landlord, and then he looked at Young Wild West.

"It is a pretty good name for the camp, according to all accounts," our hero spoke up. "But I guess that sort of work is about done for."

"What sort of work?" queried the man behind the counter.

"Why, hanging strangers who do not agree with the way things are done here."

"You think it's about done for, do yer?"

"That is just the way I think."

"Well, I don't know about that."

"I do."

"You had a chance to git away, Young Wild West."

"I know it, but I didn't want to go."

"You'll wish you had, though."

"That is a threat, so I guess we may as well start in to take care of you fellows. You can consider yourself my prisoner, Mr. What's-your-name!"

The rascal gave a violent start.

"I mean what I say," went on our hero. "Just step out here and place your hands behind your back, while one of my partners tie them. I am going to show you that you fellows can't run things the way you have been doing. Do as I say!"

The muzzle of a shooter was leveled at the man's head now, and, without another word, he came from behind the roughly-made counter.

He looked at the three villains appealingly, but neither of them offered to interfere, or even say a word.

"What do you fellows think about this?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, as Jim Dart quickly tied the saloon-keeper's hands behind him and relieved him of his weapons.

"We think you're makin' a mistake," answered one of them. "If you don't jump off the earth afore sunrise to-morrow mornin' I'll be a very much surprised mortal!"

"You will, hey?"

"That's 'right."

"Will you be one to help hang us?"

"I reckon I will."

"And how about you fellers?"

The last was addressed to the other two.

"Oh, we'll have ter help if ther boss tells us to," was the reply.

"An' you'll be glad an' willin' to do it?"

"Oh, I should reckon so!"

"All right, then. Now jest consider yourselves prisoners along with ther boss of this shebang. Young Wild West has started ther ball a-rollin', an' I reckon it will be kept goin' fur a while."

The villains did not expect anything like this, though they might have known it when they saw the proprietor made a prisoner.

One of them reached for his revolver.

But the scout was altogether too quick for him and knocked it from his hand before he could use it.

"I guess not, you measly coyote!" he exclaimed. "Now ther first move like that ag'in an' lead will begin to fly!"

Neither the lieutenant nor the three men with him offered to draw a revolver.

They were really astonished at the coolness displayed by Young Wild West and his partners.

While Charlie and Wild covered the men Jim took their revolvers and knives from them and bound their hands behind them.

This done, our hero ordered them to march outside.

When they were out he looked around the interior of the place and found some cardboard and marking-ink.

The bad men had a good supply of this material on hand, as they used plenty of placards to carry out their work.

Wild took one of the pieces of cardboard and did some lettering on it.

Then he walked outside and closed the door, after which he tacked the placard on it.

THIS PLACE CLOSED!

Will stay closed until the proprietor proves his ownership to the land it is built upon.

By order of

YOUNG WILD WEST.

That is what all hands read when they looked at the placard.

"You made up your mind what to do pretty quick, Wild," said Jim, with a smile.

"Yes," was the reply, "I never thought of doing anything like this until the saloon-keeper made that threatening remark. Since the bad men of the Jumping-off Place stick to it that they are going to hang us, we may as well act a little on the aggressive. I have just made up my mind to change things around here if I have to shoot every scoundrel in the camp to do it!"

The last was said with a meaning glance at the prisoners, and it had its effect, too.

They showed signs of great uneasiness.

Wild marched them over to the store.

Reuben Jones stood looking at them with amazement depicted on his face.

"Mr. Jones," said our hero, smiling at him, "can you show papers to prove that you own this ground and building?"

"Yes," was the reply; "I kin show my deed fur ther ground."

"All right, then. Just let's see it."

The store-keeper hesitated.

"Never mind!" said the daring young deadshot. "We'll take charge of the store for a while. It seems to be about the best built shanty in the camp, and we will use it for our headquarters until things are straightened out. Charlie, just take the prisoners inside and put them somewhere so they can't get out till we want them to."

The storekeeper was more amazed than ever.

His jaw dropped when he saw the four villains led in and tied to the hooks he had there to hang hams and rashers of bacon on.

"We are not going to interfere with your trade any," said Wild to Jones. "You can do business right along and we will pay you for everything we get. But don't you dare to let these men loose!"

"But you've no right to come in here without my con-

sent. I will prove to you that I own the ground this store is built on."

"All right. If you can prove that we will ask your consent to make this shanty our headquarters."

Reuben Jones soon produced a document which Orth declared was all right.

"The land is his, I guess," he remarked.

"Good!" Wild exclaimed. "Now, Mr. Reuben Jones, can we make your shanty our headquarters for a day or two?"

The question was asked in such a meaning way that the store-keeper promptly retorted:

"Yes, I s'pose yer kin."

"That's all there is to it. I'm glad you know enough to act right. It will be all the better for you in the end."

"Why didn't yer tell him no?" called out the saloon-keeper.

"You shut up!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "If you don't I'll see how close I kin come ter yer without hittin' yer!"

That silenced him.

"What do you propose to do?" asked the lieutenant a minute later, as Wild walked to the door.

"Just what I have started to do—to make the Worst Camp in the West a decent place," was the reply.

"Well, I guess it is time for the government land agents to begin an investigation, then."

"It surely is."

The face of the store-keeper lighted up at this.

"I'll help you any way I kin, gentlemen," he said.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD SHOWS WHAT HE CAN DO BESIDES SHOOTING.

Our friends took their horses around to the shed that was in the rear of the store and found a man in the employ of Jones there.

He was a half-witted fellow, and when our hero told him that they were going to stay there by the consent of his boss he made room for the animals at once.

"What sort of sleeping quarters can you give us?" our hero asked Jones when he came back.

"Well, you kin see that there ain't much room here," was the reply. "But I reckon you won't git much chance ter sleep to-night, though."

"You think the outlaw gang will make it too warm for us for that, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, we are going to take the chances, anyhow."

"There's plenty of blankets in ther store which you kin make beds out of."

"Thank you. We may use some of them. I hardly think we will have to sleep in here more than one night, anyhow. The bad men will soon agree with us that they are making a mistake in trying to keep honest people away from here."

Orth now got out a memorandum-book from his pocket and Jones gave the name of nearly every man in the camp and the number of the claim they were occupying.

The land agent compared them with a list he had and found that not half of them agreed.

"How is this?" he asked, as he walked over to the saloon-keeper. "What became of the twenty-five men who owned the claims here?"

"Some of 'em took twenty minutes ter git out of ther camp an' ther rest 'jumped off,'" was the brazen reply.

"Ah! You are willing to admit that, then?"

"Of course I am! I'm glad ter tell it, too. This is ther Worst Camp in ther West, an' don't yer furgit it!"

Then he found that not one of the four prisoners could give proof of owning the property that was set down to them.

"I guess you did right in closing the saloon, Young Wild West," he remarked to our hero. "This man has no right to it, and, besides, he has been selling whisky without a license from the government."

For the first time the saloon-keeper showed signs of fear. Probably it was the mention of the government that caused this.

"Are you from ther license headquarters?" he asked.

"Not exactly," was the reply.

"But you're workin' fur ther government, though?"

"Yes; we all are."

"Young Wild West, too?"

"No!" spoke up our hero; "we are working on our own hook—my partners and I. But it won't make any difference to you or any of your gang who we are working for. You'll have to cave in or go under, just the same."

The other three prisoners had little or nothing to say.

It was plain, though, that they were more than uneasy.

But they hoped to be released when Gil Gilter got back.

In a little while our friends heard the clatter of hoofs.

They hurried out of the store to see what it meant.

Then they saw a dozen or more men riding up the single street of the mining camp.

They were Gil Gilter and his men.

Straight up to the saloon they rode, and when they got off their horses and looked at the placard they were a surprised lot of men.

"I guess there'll be a fight now, if there's ever goin' to be one," observed the scout.

"Quite likely," Wild answered.

"Well, we may as well be ready for it, then," Jim Dart said.

It suddenly occurred to Wild that it might be a good idea to show the villains what a deadshot he was.

He knew they feared him to a certain extent already, but if he could only surprise them by some fancy shooting he felt that they would be more cautious than ever of him.

Among other supplies in the store he had noticed a barrel of lamp chimneys.

"Bring out a dozen of those lamp chimneys," he said to Jones. "I want to buy them."

"All right," was the reply, and in a short time they were there.

Meanwhile the outlaws had dismounted and were evidently waiting for an order from their leader.

Gil Gilter went over and tore the placard from the door of the saloon.

Then he started to open the door.

"Hold on there!" cried Young Wild West. "If you don't stop that I'll shoot you dead in your tracks!"

The leader of the bad men hesitated.

Somehow he felt sure that the boy would keep his word.

"I reckon this place ain't yourn," he retorted.

"Well, it isn't yours, either. It belongs to the man who was running it until a little while ago until it is proved that he took the land to build it upon from some other fellow without paying for it. Now, let me tell you one thing, Gil Gilter! This might be called the Jumping-off Place, but there is going to be no more hanging of innocent men here, and don't you forget it! If there's any jumping off the earth, as you call it, done in the next few hours it is you and your gang who will be the victims."

There was no reply to this.

But the villains were talking in low tones together.

Wild now told Jim Dart to throw one of the lamp chimneys into the air.

Jim picked up one and let it go.

It went across the street directly over the heads of the group of men in front of the closed saloon.

Young Wild West's revolver spoke and down came a shower of broken glass upon them.

A nod from the young deadshot caused him to let another chimney go in the same direction.

Crack!

That, too, went to pieces and the gang got the benefit of it.

"We haven't any glass balls to shoot at, so we're using lamp chimneys!" Wild called out to the men. "You see, I'm one of the sort who likes to be shooting at something every once in a while, and when there is no chance to pop over anything else that amounts to anything, I try my luck at targets. I will shoot against any man in the camp for a hundred dollars."

There was no answer to this.

"Come," went on Wild, as Jim tossed up another chimney and he broke it with a left-hand shot; "isn't there at least one man in that crowd who knows how to shoot?"

"There's plenty here what knows how ter shoot," retorted Gil Gilter; "but it might be that they don't know how ter shoot as quick an' straight as you do. Is shootin' all you kin do that's out of ther ordinary?"

"He kin lick any galoot in your crowd in less than five minutes without usin' a shooter or a knife!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, before our hero could answer.

"He kin, hev'?"

"Yes!" reiterated the scout.

"Well, there's where you make a mistake."

"I'll bet you fifty dollars I ain't makin' no mistake!"

"I'll go yer!"

"All right. Put your money in ther store-keeper's hands here. He's good enough to hold ther stakes fur me, anyhow."

"Oh, he'll do fur me, too. Jones is honest, an' that's what we want here—honest men."

"How long have you been that way?" Wild asked, with a laugh.

"Ah, always."

"I guess they are coming around all right," our hero said to the lieutenant and his men.

"It rather looks that way," was the reply. "But how about the bet your partner is making?"

"Oh, I am going to make him win it."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"But there are some powerful-looking men in that bunch."

"I know that."

"There are men there who ought to be able to whip you in a fight with the greatest of ease."

"I know that. They ought to be able to do it, and probably they are. But I don't think that way."

At this juncture Gil Gilter placed his fifty dollars in the hands of the store-keeper to cover Charlie's.

"Ther money is up!" he said.

"All right!" answered our hero. "Fetch out the best man you have got."

"How about it, Gaff? Are you willin' ter go in a rough-an'-tumble fight with Young Wild West, without usin' your shooter or knife?"

"You bet I am!" was the reply.

"Good! I reckon you're about ther best one we've got at ther business, an' if you can't lick a boy I ain't got no further use fur yer."

"I don't want yer to have, Gil," was the retort, and the villain laughed as though it was all a farce, anyhow.

He no doubt thought he could handle Young Wild West with the greatest of ease.

He was possessed of great strength, and he was willing to back that against skill.

The favorite of the Boss of the Bad Men stepped out into the road.

"Give it to him good an' hard, Wild!" said Charlie. "Ther measly coyote has only got one eye, anyhow, an' if you give him a good punch in it he won't be able to see what he is doing."

"Oh, I don't want to injure his eye, Charlie," was the reply. "I want him to see all that takes place—that is, if he is quick enough to see it."

Gaff had handed his weapons to one of the crowd he was with, so our hero turned his over to Jim Dart.

"I hardly think there will be any foul play about this," Wild said. "But if you see any of them make a move to interfere in any way, just shoot to kill!"

This was said loud enough for every one to hear.

As Wild was stepping out into the road to meet his huge antagonist it occurred to him that the four prisoners might as well see the fight.

As yet Gilter and his gang did not know what had become of the saloon-keeper.

Our hero told Jim to go in the store and fetch the prisoners out.

When they came out with their hands tied behind them a few seconds later Gil Gilter and his men could scarcely believe their eyes.

"What's the matter, Dane?" Gilter said to the saloon-keeper; "what in thunderation are yer doin' there?"

"Young Wild West took us prisoners," was the reply. "Ain't yer going ter git us out of this?"

"Oh, I reckon so. But jest wait a while. Things is a little queer jest now. We've struck quite a snag, an' we don't want ter hurt any one, yer know."

Gaff, the one-eyed man, was now strutting about in the center of the narrow way that was called a street by some, his sleeves rolled up and his breast thrown up.

"I never struck a man what could whip me in a rough-an'-tumble fight, let alone a boy!" he boasted. "Come on if you're goin' ter fight!"

Wild now went out to him.

The boy was as cool as an iceberg.

The villain really looked formidable as he pranced about with doubled-up fists.

"Are you ready?" our hero asked, smiling as though he was simply going to show the fellow a trick.

"You bet I am!" was the retort. "I've been ready ther last five minutes."

"Well, here you go, then!"

Wild made a dart for him, but stopped just out of his reach.

Out shot the big fist of Gaff, but it clove the empty air!

It was such a heavy blow he had struck that he almost lost his balance from the impetus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Young Wild West. "Why didn't you hit me?"

He simply wanted to make the man furious, and then he would have him just where he wanted him.

Gaff came for him again.

He was like an enraged lion this time.

Biff!

Wild struck him a blow under the heart that jarred his whole body.

The one-eyed man staggered back a few steps and sank to the ground.

"What's the matter with you—tired?" the boy asked, tantalizingly.

The lookers-on were astonished.

It was a heavy blow the boy had landed, they knew, but they could not understand why it was that their big champion had gone down before it.

It was easy enough for Charlie and Jim to see, though. Wild had landed the blow in a place that can't stand too much of a shock.

Gaff looked around him in a dazed way for a moment and then slowly got upon his feet.

"Yer hit me in ther wind!" he cried, savagely, as he prepared to make another rush.

"Oh, no I didn't," was the cool rejoinder. "But it makes no difference if I did; this is a rough-and-tumble fight."

Like a tornado the one-eyed bad man came for the boy.

Will dodged the swinging blows with the greatest of ease and waited for a good opening.

It came very quickly.

He landed a stiff one between the villain's eyes and he staggered back.

Biff!

Another one caught him on the ribs just below the heart.

Down went Gaff as limp as a wet rag!

"I thought he was such a fighter," Jim Dart said to Gil Gilter, who was standing in the road, the picture of amazement.

"He is," was the retort. "But it seems that Young Wild West knows more tricks about ther game than he does."

"Perhaps you know how to fight, or wrestle," said Wild, turning to him.

"Well, I reckon I does know somethin 'about wrastlin'," was the answer.

"But you know more about hangin' innercent men, though," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"This are ther Jumpin-off Place, yer know," was the rather dry response.

"Look out you ain't one of ther ones what'll jump off!"

"I ain't worryin' about it."

"I believe you lie when you say that."

The scout was just itching to get a chance to let himself out.

He knew the bad gang was not made up of the pluckiest lot of men in the world, and he felt like getting at some of them and showing them a thing or two.

Young Wild West porbably could not give him points at wrestling and sparring, the scout being a very fiend at that kind of business.

He was wonderfully quick for a man of his size, and when it came to courage there was simply no lack of it.

Charlie wanted to have a go with the leader of the bad gang, and he wanted it bad.

"I'll wrastle yer to see whether you quit ther game you've been workin' here or whether I git out of ther camp fur good!" he said, stepping up to the villain.

"I'll go yer!" was the quick reply.

It was at this moment that Young Wild West happened to turn his eyes toward the narrow pass that formed an entrance to the little valley.

He saw the figure of a man in a tree-top waving a handkerchief!

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR FRIENDS GET A LITTLE CLOSER TO THE TOP.

The man Wild saw in the tree-top was old Silas Okeson.

He had led his men to the little pass, but had been a little bit afraid to come into the camp.

They had waited around there for some time, hoping to find out just where Amelia Hope had been taken.

It had not occurred to them that the villain had turned from the trail before they came to the camp, and they felt sure that the girl was in one of the shanties.

Okeson climbed a tree and waited for a chance to see Young Wild West if he was still alive.

It was not until the villainous gang rode up to the front of the closed saloon that he saw him, and then it was when our hero and his companions came out of the store.

The old man did his best to attract the attention of our friends, but failed to do so until just as Charlie proposed to wrestle with the Boss of the Bad Men.

And it was only by accident that Wild saw the man and the waving handkerchief then.

Our hero could not recognize who it was, but he could easily tell it was some one who was afraid of the gang that ran the camp.

He thought, of course, that Silas Okeson and his friends had gone on unmolested.

He did not want to leave where he was just then, so while the scout and Gilter were talking, he turned to Orth and whispered:

"See that man in the tree over there?"

"Yes," replied the land agent, as his attention was directed the proper way.

"Well, go over there without any one seeing you and find out what the trouble is. You can go around back of the horse-shed and get there, I guess."

"All right," was the reply, and Orth started away.

Wild then turned his attention to Gaff, who was just rising to his feet.

"Wait until we finish our rough-and-tumble, Charlie, before you do any wrestling," he said.

"I don't want ter fight any more," exclaimed the one-eyed man, as he limped painfully away.

"All right, then. I am glad you've got enough."

"I'll take that stake money!" spoke up the scout, turning to the store-keeper.

Jones looked at Gilter before he made a move to produce the money.

"Give it to him," said the boss; "he won it, I reckon. When I makes a bet an' loses I never squeals."

The scout took the money and placed it in his pocket. "Now," said he, "I'm ready to wrastle with you. Maybe you want to bet a fifty on ther result."

"I'll go yer!"

"All right. That makes two bets we've got, understand. Ther first one holds good."

"Sartin. If you down me twice out of three you win."

The villains standing around were as much interested as our friends were.

They watched with the greatest of interest.

Gil Gilter was fully as tall as Cheyenne Charlie and about fifteen pounds heavier.

But they made a good match as they faced each other.

"How's it goin' to be?" the scout asked.

"Run in an' grab for holds," was the reply. "That's fair fur one as ther other."

"Good enough! Now, then, you measly coyote, let yourself slide!"

Then they began stepping about for an opening.

Pretty soon they came together.

Gilter, who was no mean hand at the game, got Charlie about the waist.

But the scout was altogether too quick for him.

He reached over with his long arms and got a grip on the left leg of his opponent.

He put on all his strength and pulled upward.

Bump!

Down went the boss on his face and stomach, he letting go his hold to save himself.

Before he could get up the agile scout was upon him.

It took Charlie three minutes to turn him over so his shoulders were on the ground, but when he got him there it was a sure case of a fall.

"That's one for me," panted the scout, as he brushed the dirt from his buckskin breeches. "I reckon ther next one won't be so hard."

"It won't, hey? Jest wait an' see. That was only an accident."

After a short breathing spell they went at it again.

This time Charlie went right at him.

He got the very hold he wanted and flung the big villain over his head.

Thud!

Gilter hit the ground and caused a jar to be felt by the spectators.

He lay there partially stunned, too, for the space of several seconds.

"That's two straight for me!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Are you satisfied?"

"No!" shrieked Gilter, who was now in a rage at having been defeated. "You ain't throwed me fair yet?"

"I thought you never squealed when you lost a bet?" Wild spoke up.

The villain calmed down a little.

"Do yer think I lost ther bet?" he asked.

"You certainly did."

"How about it, boys?" and he turned to his followers.

"It wasn't fair!" shouted one.

The rest joined in with him, so the majority of the spectators were against Charlie.

"Well, I didn't think you would keep your word if you lost," remarked our hero in his easy-going way. "But Charlie will take the money in the hands of the stakeholder, just the same. And now, just to show you how easy you can be thrown, I am going to tackle you. Get ready, Gil Gilter! I am going to slam you on the ground so hard that your bones will fairly rattle!"

"You can't do it, Young Wild West. You kin shoot quicker than lightnin', an' you kin fight like a young tornado. But yer can't chuck me fair in a wrastlin' game!"

"Well, just say when you are ready and I will show you whether I can or not."

"I'm ready!"

Young Wild West started for him like an arrow from the bow.

It was easy for the active young fellow to grab him where he wanted to.

He got his right arm around the man's neck from the front and caught him about the hips with his left.

Then with his knee for a fulcrum, he whirled him over as though he had been a mere bundle of straw.

Gilter had made a vain effort to get hold of his youthful opponent, and when he struck the ground this time he was dead to the world instantly.

"He's only stunned," said our hero, calmly, as he looked at the gang of surprised outlaws. "It would be a good thing if he was dead, though, I am thinking."

The men said nothing to this.

The remarkable prowess of the dashing deadshot was altogether too much for them.

His fearlessness alone had made them look upon him with respect, but when he got into action it was more than they expected to see.

Wild knew it was all over, as far as any further contests were concerned, so he turned and walked to the door of the store.

As he did so one of the ruffians jerked a shooter from his belt and fired at him.

It was done so quickly that the man failed to take good aim.

But the bullet found a billet, just the same!

It hit one of the prisoners in the left breast and he dropped with an agonizing cry.

Crack!

The echoes of the first report had not died out when another sounded.

It was Cheyenne Charlie who had fired.

He had been in the act of taking his weapons from Jim when he saw the villain across the road fire at Wild.

His aim was true, too, and with the sound of the two shots two of the outlaw gang dropped out of the race forever!

"Say!" said Wild, looking at them coolly. "If you want to try any more of that kind of business just go ahead!"

No one made a reply.

But just then some of the bad gang who had been at work showed up.

They evinced great surprise at seeing the saloon closed, and more when they saw the proprietor in front of the store with his hands tied behind him.

"What's ther matter, Gil?" one of them asked, turning to the boss, who was leaning against the side of the shanty trying to gather himself together.

The reply could not be heard by our friends, but they could guess what it was.

"This is what you call the Jumping-off Place!" Wild called out, with a laugh. "But I guess if there is any more jumping off done it will be done by you fellows."

At this juncture Jackson put in a word.

"Men," said he, infusing considerable oratory in his words, "I advise you to be decent. Just make up your minds that you are going to do right. If any of you are working claims that don't belong to you, quit them at once. We came here to straighten things out in the Worst Camp in the West, and we are going to do it if we have to send for a company of soldiers to help us. You have gone the full length of your rope, and if you want to escape being hanged, now is your time to say so."

There was a silence after that.

Then the outlaw gang got together and talked for about ten minutes in low voices.

The result was that Gil Gilter turned and said:

"Give us an hour ter think an' talk it over. We'll let yer know our terms in that time."

"All right!" was the retort. "Take an hour, then. Just remember that you are bound to lose if you don't come to an agreement with us."

The villain turned and left the spot, those having horses leading them along with them.

CHAPTER IX.

A FOUL PLOT.

It was a big come-down for the gang of outlaws, who had been running things their own way at the Jumping-off Place, even to agree to a proposal to make terms.

But Gil Gilter had no intention of giving in, just the same!

He had decided to set a trap for those who had come there to break up their way of doing business.

When the villains went away, after promising to let Jackson know what they would do inside of an hour, they headed straight for the lone cabin on the mountain-side.

"I'll tell yer what we'll do, boys!" exclaimed the leader, when they halted in front of the shanty in which he lived. "I've got a can of nitro-glycerine in here, an' we'll rig a plan ter blow up that gang!"

"How kin it be done?" asked Gaff.

"Easy enough, I reckon. There's jest seven in that crowd, an' we'll all go back but seven of us; an' then we'll send word that we want Young Wild West an' all hands of 'em ter come ter talk it over an' sign a paper to ther effect that we'll be let alone if we give in ter 'em. They'll come, an' when they walk inter ther shanty we'll blow ther blamed thing up with ther nitro-glycerine."

"Good!" cried all hands in unison.

"Jest leave it ter me! I'll figger it out so it'll be bound ter work."

He got the can of explosive and then they went on through the woods until they reached the cabin.

They had forgotten all about the friends of the girl who was confined there, but Gilter had not forgotten her.

The scoundrel was now trying to work a game that would win out for them.

But he knew that if they succeeded in killing Young Wild West and the rest it would only be a short time before the camp would be set upon by the soldiers.

Then they would have to leave or get shot!

Gilter meant to get his revenge upon our hero and then strike out somewhere else with the girl, taking half a dozen of his most trusted friends with him.

He cared not what happened to the rest.

They found Hoke on guard at the log cabin, and the man seemed real glad to see them.

"What's up?" he asked, as he saw the can in the hands of his leader.

"Somethin' will be up afore long," retorted Gilter, with a laugh. "I reckon it will be Young Wild West an' his pards an' three or four government men."

"Government men!" echoed Hoke.

"Yes, government men. There's a lieutenant an' three other fellers down at ther camp. They've come here ter straighten things up, an' I've made up my mind ter blow 'em all up!"

The boss did not go in to see his fair prisoner just then.

He picked out five of the men and told them of his plans in a whisper.

They listened and agreed with him.

The men selected by him were Gaff, Hoke, Jule and two others.

The reason Gilter selected them was because he knew they were villains of the deepest dye—men who were wanted by the sheriffs of several counties and who were outlaws in every sense of the word, like himself.

"How are yer goin' ter do this thing?" the fellow called Jule asked.

"Well, I've been thinkin' a whole lot since it got inter my head. I guess about ther best way ter do it would be ter put ther can of nitro-glycerine in ther shanty an' then hang an ax or somethin' over it, so a pull on a string would let it down. Then there would be an explosion, an' it would be ther last of Young Wild West an' ther rest of 'em."

"It would be a new way ter jump off ther earth, all right!" exclaimed Gaff.

"You're right it would!" nodded the leader. "I reckon it kin be done, too, 'cause I've got a ball of cord, an' we could git fur enough away ter be out of danger afore pullin' ther string."

"Of course we could," nodded Hoke.

"Well, we'll fix ther thing up right away. You fellers kin tell ther rest of ther gang what's goin' ter be done, but don't let 'em know that we're goin' ter quit ther camp after it's over."

They told him they would do just as he said, and then for the next ten minutes all were talking over the novel plot to rid the world of their enemies.

Gilter supervised the rigging of the infernal machine.

The can was placed on the floor under a table at one end of the log structure.

Then a string was led off through the woods for a distance of a hundred and fifty feet, the end left tied to the table leg until they got ready to put the pick, which had been selected to explode the nitro-glycerine, in position.

When this was all done Gilter went in to see the girl he intended to make his bride.

Amelia Hope had been worrying considerably all this time.

She wondered where her lover and friends were and why they had not tracked the villains to the cabin.

Her eyes flashed when she saw who it was that had entered the room.

"I do not want to see or talk to you?" she exclaimed.

"Now, don't git mad, little gal," admonished the scoundrel. "I wouldn't harm a hair of your head. I'm Gil Gilter, ther Boss Bad Man of ther Jumpin'-off Place! But I wouldn't hurt a putty gal like you!"

"Why don't you let me out of this place so I can go back to my friends, then?" she answered.

"Friends, did yer say? That's so! Yer did have some friends with yer, didn't yer? Well, I don't know where they are now. I reckon they must have give yer up as lost an' gone on without botherin' ter look fur ye. They knowed it wouldn't be healthy fur 'em ter come around here."

"Well, they will come, see if they don't!" flashed the girl.

"I don't think so, Miss What's-your-name."

"They will find Young Wild West and his partners and then you will suffer for what you have done."

"I reckon not, miss. Young Wild West will soon be out of ther land of ther livin'! He's got ter ther place where he jumps off, yer know."

"Scoundrel!"

"That ain't ther right sort of a name ter call your intended husband."

"How dare you!"

"Now, see here! Don't git mad! If yer do I won't like it. Yer may as well make up your mind ter be Mrs. Gilter, fur that's what you'll be as soon as I kin find a dominic ter tie ther knot."

This was more than the brave girl could stand.

She broke into a fit of weeping.

"Don't!" cried the villain, really imploringly. "I can't

stand it! I hates ter see a putty little gal cry. Stop it, won't yer? I'll take yer out of here if you will."

This made another wonderful change in the girl.

She dried her tears instantly.

"You will take me out?" she inquired.

"Yes! Right away, too!"

It must have occurred to the captive that she would stand a chance of getting away from him if she once got out of the cabin.

At any rate she showed great willingness to go.

The fact was that she had heard enough of the conversation of the men in the adjoining room to know that they were going to blow up the building after they got Young Wild West and his friends in it.

She did not want to be there when such a thing took place, and it was just possible that she might be able to spoil the plot.

So when he told her to come she hastened to obey.

Out into the other apartment the outlaw led her.

"Where are yer goin', Gil?" one of the men, who was not in touch with the whole scheme, asked.

"I'm goin' ter take ther gal ter a safe place," was the reply. "Yer don't s'pose I want her ter be blowed up, too, do yer?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, I reckon I don't! She's goin' ter be Mrs. Gil Gilter afore many days, I kin tell yer!"

"Well, Gil, I reckon it would be safer fur yer ter tie her so she can't git away," suggested Hoke.

"Yes, I guess I will."

Then, in spite of the girl's protestations, he strapped the belt around her, pinning her arms to her sides.

"I reckon that'll do," he observed. "Now, then, you fellers know what ter do. Yer kin git along without me, I reckon. I'm goin' right ter my shanty if ther way is clear. Jest git that pick up in the place an' then all come over ter my shanty, with one of yer stayin' at ther end of ther cord in ther woods over there. He'll know what ter do when Young Wild West an' ther rest goes in ther shanty."

"Well, I reckon I'll be ther one ter pull ther string," said Gaff. "I've got a grudge ter settle with Young Wild West, anyhow."

"Villains!" cried the girl as Gilter led her away.

But he threatened to shoot her if she said another word, so those remaining heard no more from her.

"Now, boys, I reckon we'll git ready fur ther greatest jumpin'-off as ever took place in ther Worst Camp in ther West!" exclaimed Gaff, who acted as a sort of leader in the absence of Gilter.

"All right," answered Hoke. "We've got ter be mighty careful how we rig things. One little mistake might blow us all up, an' then Young Wild West would have ther laugh on us."

"We won't make no mistakes about it," observed another one. "We kin set ther pick ready with ther can out from under it. Then when we git it jest ready we kin shove ther can under it, an' there you are!"

"That's right," nodded Gaff. "You've got a great head, Bill."

"I always knowed I wasn't what might be called a fool," was the rejoinder.

They started in to lay the fiendish trap.

Every one of them wanted to place the pick in position, so as to be able to say that they had rigged the thing so it put their enemies out of the world.

They wrangled about it, and at length Gaff interfered.

"I'll tell yer what we'll do," he said.

"What?" and the wrangling ceased instantly.

"We'll chuck d'ce ter see who fixes ther pick so's it'll drop on ther nitro-glycerine."

"Good!"

They were all willing to take a chance in that way.

The villains were confirmed gamblers, anyhow, as the majority of their kind are.

Gaff produced three dice and a battered leather cup from his pocket.

"I'll throw first," he said.

He rattled the dice in the box and threw them out on the table.

"Fourteen!" he cried. "I reckon that's putty good."

Hoke followed and did not throw half that number.

Three more followed, not one of them coming up to the throw.

Then the man called Jule stepped up and rolled out fifteen.

"I guess I'm ther one as will do ther job!" he cried, triumphantly.

"Yei can't always tell," answered the next man, and then he threw fifteen.

"A tie!" went up from those who were close enough to count the spots on the little cubes.

"That's what it is, boys!" said Gaff; "it's a tie."

They rolled out the dice in their turn until only two more were there to throw.

One of these was the fellow called Bill.

"I'll go last," he said, so the other fellow rattled the box and made a throw.

"Sixteen!" shouted the gang.

That was what it was, sure enough.

"Don't git crazy about it," said Bill, as he put the dice in the box. "Jes' wait till I throw seventeen."

He went at it as calmly as though he really meant what he said.

And then he rolled them out.

"Seventeen, by jingo!" exclaimed Hoke. "There's two sixes an' a five!"

"I told yer so!" said Bill, puffing himself out with pride.

"Bill's won!" cried the rest.

"That's what he has, boys!"

"I'll be ther one that'll set ther trap fur Young Wild West!" said the villain, who considered himself a very lucky mortal just then. "I'll put up ther pick, all right."

"Well, don't make no mistake about it," said Gaff, as he left the cabin. "I'll go on down an' send over an' let Young Wild West an' his gang know that we're ready ter make an agreement with 'em."

Hoke, Jule and the two others followed.

The rest gathered about Bill to watch him set the pick in place.

The five quickly made their way to the shanty of their leader, taking a round-about course.

Gil Gilter was there at the door to meet them.

"Is everything all right?" he asked.

Before a reply could be made a deafening explosion sounded on the mountain-side.

"There!" exclaimed Gaff; "that blamed fool of a Bill has blowed 'em all up!"

CHAPTER X.

WILD AND HIS PARTNERS CAUGHT.

The outlaws had not been gone long when Young Wild West turned to his partners and said:

"I guess it would be a good idea to follow them up and see what they are driving at, boys."

Just then Orth came hurrying back, and that changed the subject right away.

"There are eight or ten men hiding up there," he said, "and one of them told me to tell you that the bad men have got his grand-daughter a prisoner somewhere in the camp."

"What!" cried Wild in astonishment.

"That is right. The man's name is Silas Okeson. He says a gang of the men rode up and made out that they were on their way to Boulder. They waited for the chance, and one of them caught the girl from her horse and rode away with her."

"Well, by jingo!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Who'd have thought ther measly coyotes was up to anything like that?"

Okeson had told the story just as it happened, so Orth was not long in relating it.

"The chances are that they have got the girl at the very place they are going to now," said Wild, after a moment's thought. "Come on, boys! We must get her away from them."

As the villains had departed on foot, they did the same. It was easy to follow them, for they caught a glimpse of the gang as they disappeared in the woods.

"Some one had better stay here to guard the prisoners, hadn't they?" said Jackson.

"Yes," answered our hero.

"I will, for one!" spoke up Lieutenant Kenny.

"Well, I'll stay with you. I guess there is no danger here just now."

This being settled, Wild and the rest started off.

They went right on past the shanty of Gilter and up the hill over a trail that was fresh that day.

Our hero advised them to be cautious and not make too much noise.

Then they soon came in sight of the lone cabin in the clearing.

They worked their way around and soon reached a spot where they could see it clearly.

But it was only the rear that they saw, and it happened that at just that very minute Gilter started for his own shanty with his captive.

As the girl's scream rang out Charlie was for making a dash to save her, but Wild checked him.

"Easy!" he cautioned. "They have got her in the cabin. There are too many of them for us to make a dash upon. They could mow us down, for the building has loopholes in it. Just wait a while."

This was good advice, as they all thought.

After waiting about ten minutes they crept around so as to get a view of the front of the cabin.

It was just at this time that the dice-throwing was in progress, and through the open door they could see the men very much interested over something.

In a very few minutes five of them came out and walked down the hill.

They were Gaff and the rest.

"Now," said Wild, "I have an idea that more of them will come out pretty soon. If they do we will creep up as close as we can without being seen and make a dash for the cabin. The young lady must be there, for that is where the scream came from."

In a few moments our hero decided that it would be advisable to get a little nearer, anyhow, so he arose to his feet.

The rest followed his example.

Just then something that was entirely unexpected to them happened.

"Look!" shouted Wild.

A terrific explosion sounded in the hut.

A shower of debris flew up in the air and several of the outlaws were blown out of the building.

The men with Wild were nearly hurled to the ground by the shock.

"Great gimlets!" ejaculated Cheyenne Charlie, as he recovered his balance. "What has ther measly coyotes done?"

"They have blown up the shanty and they went up with it, I should say," retorted our hero, starting for the scene of the explosion on a run.

It was at that moment that Silas Okeson and his men came riding up.

They had seen our friends making their way along from the place where they were hiding, and they had started in the same direction, feeling that Young Wild West was trying to rescue the girl.

They galloped up to the wrecked log cabin and got there the same time our friends did.

"What's happened?" asked Silas Okeson, his face as white as chalk. "Amelia wasn't in there, was she?"

"I don't know," answered Wild. "I had an idea she was, but I hope not."

They pushed their way in among the debris and a fearful sight met their gaze.

The bodies in there were unrecognizable.

Wild took a good look around, and, finding that there was nothing there that looked anything like female wearing apparel, turned and went outside.

He came upon a man who was alive, though mortally wounded from the explosion.

"Whisky!" gasped the dying man.

Silas Okeson quickly supplied his wants, as he had a flask with him.

"Was the girl in the cabin when it blew up?" asked Wild.

"No!" was the reply. "Gil Gilter took her out a few minutes ago."

A sigh of relief went up from all hands.

"Where did he take her?" asked our hero.

"Down to his——"

That was all the fellow said, for at that moment he became unconscious.

"This is what I call appalling!" exclaimed Orth. "But it is a great blessing that the young lady was not there."

"It surely is," Jim Dart declared.

"Well, we must find her!" said Wild. "I guess there is

nothing that we can do here, as they are all dead. Some of you might stay and make a search, though."

He started off down the hill.

He had an idea that the dying man was going to say that Gil Gilter had taken the girl down to his shanty.

Charlie and Jim went with him, the rest remaining at the scene of the explosion.

As soon as they had gone Orth and the men belonging to the party of travelers started in to make a thorough search.

Just then the man who had been given the whisky revived.

He managed to tell them how the explosion had occurred, and that Gil Gilter had taken the girl to his shanty, and then he expired.

The man called Bill had let the pick drop on the can of nitro-glycerine, according to his story, and then the explosion followed.

Edward Lane, the lover of the captured girl, who had recovered from the blow he had received, was with the party, and he and old man Okeson started down the hill the way Wild and his partners had gone.

The rest went out to where the ox team was waiting to bring it back to the camp, now that they knew that the majority of the bad gang was no more.

Meanwhile we will follow Young Wild West and his partners.

Just as they got in sight of the shanty occupied by Gil Gilter they heard the sounds made by horses' hoofs.

They could not see the horses, as they were on the other side of a high strip of bushes, but they realized that the villain was making his escape.

They ran swiftly to a point where they could get a view, and then caught a glimpse of five horsemen just disappearing in the woods.

One of them had a girl on his horse with him.

Wild would have taken a shot at the scoundrel if the woods had not swallowed him up so quickly.

"Boys," said he, "we have got to get our horses and run the scoundrels down. They must mean to try and leave us."

"That's right!" exclaimed Jim. "They will have a good start, too, before we can get mounted."

"We'll catch ther measly coyotes, though!" Charlie hastened to declare.

They ran back to the store, and seeing the lieutenant at the door, called out to him that they wanted their horses in a hurry.

He understood them, and at once ran around to the shed to get them.

He had the saddles on Jim's and Charlie's horses when they came up.

Then he helped Wild with his, and the three were ready to be off.

"What is the matter, anyhow?" asked the lieutenant, as they made a start.

"Five of the scoundrels have got the young lady and are riding away with her!" was all the answer he got.

Wild knew that it was apt to be a long race if the horses the outlaws had were good for anything.

Straight for the last place they had seen the villains our three friends went at a gallop.

They were not long in reaching the woods and picking up the trail.

Then with a look of determination on his face, Young Wild West set out to run the outlaws down.

But he was to overtake them much sooner than he expected.

When about two miles had been covered and they were following the trail through a gully, a startling thing happened.

Though it was identical with some things that had happened to our hero before, there was no help for it.

A lasso dropped down from above and settled over his head and shoulders, and then there was a quick jerk and he was thrown from the saddle.

At the same moment two shots were fired from the other side of the gully and Cheyenne Charlie felt a sting on the lobe of his left ear.

Jim's horse stumbled at that very moment and he was thrown.

Crack!

Cheyenne Charlie saw a head and he fired.

There was a death-rattle and then a voice exclaimed:

"Take them alive, boys! We'll make 'em jump off ther earth!"

Whiz!

Another lariat shot through the air and Charlie was caught before he knew it.

Then out from the cover of the bushes four men rushed. One of them wound the lariat around Wild's body, pinning his arms, and the others set upon Jim and Charlie.

It was quite an easy matter to capture the three, since they were all placed at a great disadvantage.

And it all happened so quickly that there was absolutely no help for it.

Wild was a little dazed by the sudden fall he had met with when he was jerked from the back of his horse, but not so much that he did not recognize the villains.

They were the gang of Gil Gilter!

Just as they were being secured the villain himself showed up.

There had been six of the villains to ride away with the girl, but our friends had only managed to see five of them, as the other was ahead and shielded from view by the trees.

But there were only five of them now.

Cheyenne Charlie had dropped one when he came so near being shot himself.

Jim had been a little bit stunned from the tumble he took, and it was not until he was securely bound that he fully realized what had happened.

"Well, I reckon we've got yer, after all," said Gilter, smiling like a demon.

"Yes, you have got us," retorted Wild. "But be mighty careful how you treat us, though."

"Oh, we'll be mighty careful about that, won't we, boys?"

"You bet!" was the reply.

"Jest drag 'em over here an' we'll hang 'em an' have done with it!"

There was a tree just near the edge of the mouth of the gully, and the five villains dragged our three friends to it.

Then they could see the girl captive tied to another and smaller tree.

She could not utter a cry, since she was gagged, but a despairing look shone from her eyes when she saw the three prisoners.

"Git ther end of that lariat over the limb, boys! We ain't got no time ter fool!" exclaimed Gilter, pointing to the rope that Wild was bound with.

The villain's associates obeyed with great alacrity.

The lariat was tossed over the limb.

"Now unwind it an' let ther noose be around his neck, an' then jest pull!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE TABLES ARE TURNED.

When Silas Okeson and the lover of the captured girl started to follow Young Wild West and his partners in their search for the villains who had left the hut before the explosion they suddenly thought that they ought to have their horses.

So they did not go very far before they swung around and ran to the spot where they had left them.

Mounting, they took a short cut, as they supposed, in the direction our friends were running.

But they struck a deer-path and got off the track.

They rode along for nearly a mile before they found that they were not nearing the camp, and then they came to a halt.

Lane, whose head had been bandaged, was now pretty much himself, and he was very anxious about his sweetheart.

"I will shoot ther scoundrel on sight!" he exclaimed.

He had heard that Gil Gilter was the villain who had taken off Amelia.

"I hope you'll git ther chance, Ed," replied the old man.

"But I reckon we've lost ther way."

"Well, let's ride back and find the way, then. It may be that Young Wild West and his partners will need our help."

"It may be, lad. But I reckon that if Young Wild West gits in sight of ther scoundrels he'll soon drop 'em off. He kin shoot so straight that he'd have no trouble in drop-pin' 'em all around Amelia, an' not hit her."

They turned their horses and rode back to the ruined log cabin.

Then they found the way and went on down the hill. They reached the shanty that had lately been deserted by Gil Gilter, but they were not aware that this was the place the girl had been confined in, so there was nothing for them to do but to go on to the store, in front of which the rest of Wild's friends were gathered.

Silas Okeson gave a sigh of relief when he was informed that Wild and his two partners had gone on in pursuit of the scoundrels, and he at once turned to Lane and exclaimed:

"Come on, Ed! We'll foller ther trail."

"All right!" was the reply, and then off they went.

But they had lost nearly half an hour, and that meant that they had a long chase ahead of them.

But they were destined to come upon our friends and the girl much sooner than they expected.

But let us turn our attention to our hero and his companions.

Young Wild West really thought that he stood little chance of living very long when the lariat was thrown over the limb of the tree.

But he was one of the sort who never gives up, as the reader knows.

So the instant the man called Hoke began to unwind the lariat that pinned his arms to his sides he made up his mind to get away.

One of the others stood ready to take his hands and tie them behind him.

Wild waited until the rope was nearly unwound and then he took the chance of getting his hands free.

It might be that there was not enough slack to permit this in a hurry, but it was all that was left for him to do.

He was as cool as though not the least bit of danger threatened him.

A quick jerk and both hands were free.

Spat!

The villain who stood ready to tie his hands behind him received a blow between the eyes that sent him reeling!

And as Wild dealt that blow with his right fist his left hand caught hold of a revolver that was in the belt of Hoke.

Crack!

He shot the man dead in his tracks.

Crack!

The scoundrel who held the end of the lariat ready to haul the brave boy from the ground went down.

Young Wild West knew it meant life or death for him, so he fired again.

Down went another. The remaining two, who were no others than Gil Gilter and Gaff, did not wait to be shot at.

They fled behind a pile of rocks as though terror-stricken.

Their horses were there, and, mounting them, they took to the woods without so much as firing a shot.

Wild coolly threw the noose from off his neck.

"That was all right, wasn't it, boys?" he said.

"Great gimlets!" ejaculated Cheyenne Charlie. "I never seen anything like it, Wild! How did you manage to do it?"

"Why, you saw me, didn't you?"

"Yes, but it don't seem possible."

"Well, it was possible. Here! Don't you dare to get up! Lie right where you are!"

The last was directed at the man who had been knocked down.

"Don't shoot me!" he howled pleadingly.

"I won't, but I ought to," was the reply of the daring boy. "I will save you to give an exhibition at the Jumping-off Place."

Wild quickly took his weapons from him, and then he walked over and released Charlie and Jim.

Next he went to Amelia Hope, whose face was radiant with joy at the sudden turn of affairs.

"Did the villains treat you roughly?" asked Wild.

"No. I can't say that they did. That man called Gil Gilter said he was going to make me marry him, though, and that was worse than if he had beat me with a stick."

"I suppose so. Well, I guess he won't marry anybody, for I mean to have him before sunset."

"When are you going after him?"

"Right away. Jim Dart will escort you back to your mother and friends, and Cheyenne Charlie and I will proceed after Gil Gilter and Gaff, the one-eyed fellow. Jim, I guess you can get along with the prisoners alone, can't you?"

"Oh, yes!" was the reply.

One of the horses of the outlaws was caught with no difficulty, and then the prisoner was placed upon it and tied there, his hands being fastened behind his back and to the saddle-girths on either side.

The rest of the horses had taken flight, so Jim took the rescued girl on with him.

"We've got to keep a sharp lookout ahead, Charlie," said our hero. "There is no telling but those fellows will anticipate being pursued and will stop in some convenient place and wait to get a shot at us."

The two rode on, following the trail with the greatest of ease.

They had covered perhaps a mile when a sharp report sounded not far ahead of them and a bullet whistled over Wild's head.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, pulling his horse behind a clump of trees in a hurry. "They are waiting for us, Charlie." Crack!

Another shot rang out and the bullet chipped a piece of bark from a tree right over Charlie's head.

The two dismounted.

"Just fire a shot over that way, Charlie, to let them know we are alive," said Wild. "I am going over to get them."

As the echoes of the report died out a mocking laugh came to their ears.

"That is all right," said our hero, nodding in a satisfied way. "Charlie, you just let a shot go at intervals of every three minutes until you hear from me."

With that Young Wild West crept away in the bushes. In just about three minutes from the time he left his partner Charlie fired.

The shot was answered, and then a smile came over our hero's face.

"He will keep them there, I guess," he muttered.

He had now worked around to a point off to the right and out of range of the bullets that might be fired by either Charlie or the outlaws.

He started straight for the point he had located as being the spot where they were concealed, using every precaution though it was hardly necessary.

The next minute he could hear them talking in low tones, and then he knew he was pretty close to them.

He could see that the place they had sought to hide themselves from view was a little hollow with a big rock at one edge of it.

It was from behind this rock that Gilter and Gaff were shooting.

If they had been anything like good shots they would surely have dropped at least one of our friends.

Wild got to within twenty feet of them, and then proceeded to get directly behind them.

Just then Charlie fired again and a bullet whistled over the rock.

Wild saw Gilter raise his rifle to his shoulder and answer the shot.

Then he thought it was time for him to act.

He got upon his feet, and, with a revolver in either hand, stepped toward them.

They were so much engrossed in looking the other way that they did not see him until he was within six paces of them.

And even then he had to address them to attract their attention.

"Well, are you done wasting your bullets?" he asked coolly.

His six-shooters covered them both, and when they saw who the speaker was the two outlaws were dumbfounded.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Gaff, his single eye twitching as though he was going to have a fit.

"No, it isn't," answered Wild smilingly. "It's only me. I have come to take you back to the Jumping-off Place! Hold up your hands!"

They both started to obey, but as he did so Gilter swung his rifle around so the muzzle of it pointed toward the boy.

Crack!

Wild fired and the bullet lodged in the villain's right arm.

Down went the rifle, while a yell of pain escaped from the lips of Gilter.

"I am going to take you to the Jumping-off Place alive, you villains!" exclaimed Wild. "Now, just make another

move like that and I'll fix your arms so you can't use them!"

Gil Gilter was only able to hold one hand over his head, but Gaff had both his up.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"Come on, Charlie! I've got them!" shouted Wild.

The scout answered and then came running up.

Wild looked around and found their horses, and then he told the captured men to step forward and mount.

They both were tied on, and, without any further loss of time, the start back to the camp was made.

Young Wild West was now satisfied with his visit to the Worst Camp in the West.

When they got back to the camp they found things very lively there.

The emigrants were all there, and they had pitched their camp right alongside the store.

Jim Dart ran forward to meet his two partners.

"You had not been gone long when Okeson and the young fellow who is the girl's beau came along," he said. "Then we all came back together. Okeson wanted to take some of his men and follow you up, but I told him that you would need no help. I knew you so well that I was sure you didn't want any one to help you out."

"That's right," said Wild. "We would have got the rascally outlaws if they had kept right on riding. It would have only been a question of time."

Lieutenant Kenny now came up, and when Wild had dismounted he put out his hand and exclaimed:

"Shake hands, Young Wild West! If you had not been here when we arrived I am quite certain that we would have had a hard time of it. Jackson, Orth and Helt have been going the rounds of the camp and they have learned pretty well about the claims and who owned them. We will fix the whole thing up by to-morrow afternoon and have our report made out."

"That's good!" answered Wild. "I guess the Jumping-off Place is not so very bad, after all."

"Not now it isn't. We have over a dozen men here who are willing to do the right thing, and the storekeeper is their leader. He claims that he never was bad, but just sided with the bad gang in order to be allowed to remain here and do business."

The saloon was still closed up.

When Wild had received a round cheer from all hands he walked up to where he was sitting with his hands still tied.

"Has this man proved that he owns the saloon?" he asked the lieutenant.

"Yes, he has proved that all right, but he has not proved that he owns the ground it is built upon. That belonged to a man who was driven out of the camp about two weeks ago. He says he is willing to give up the whole business if we let him off."

"Well, I won't have anything to say about the disposal of the prisoners. All I know is that Gil Gilter and Gaff tried hard to kill myself and partners. We didn't let them do it, so that is all there is to it."

Then he walked over to where the rescued girl was standing with her mother and lover.

"Mrs. Hope," said he, turning to the mother, "your daughter came near being the bride of Gil Gilter, the Boss Bad Man of the Jumping-off Place."

"I would have died before that happened!" declared the girl.

"If you had the chance you might. But if he had his way about it he would have found some one to perform the marriage ceremony, even if it was at the point of a pistol."

Gil Gilter and Gaff were still on the backs of their horses.

Wild had turned them over to the lieutenant, but as yet the officer had not given any orders as to what was to be done with them.

A desperate gleam was in the eyes of the boss.

He was tied and was upon the back of a horse.

But it suddenly occurred to him that there was one chance in a thousand, after all.

If he could dash away on the back of the horse, tied as he was, he might save himself.

He had a good chance pretty soon.

Neither Young Wild West nor his partners were watching him, and they were the ones he feared above all.

Gilter cared not what happened to Gaff or any of the rest of his followers now.

Suddenly he pressed his heels hard against the horse's flanks and let out a yell for the animal to go ahead.

The horse responded.

"There goes ther fool!" exclaimed Gaff, who was as much surprised at the action of the boss as any of the rest. "He'll jest about wind up when Young Wild West draws a bead on him."

"I never yet shot a man with his hands tied behind his back," retorted our hero.

Then he mounted his horse and set out to recapture the scoundrel.

He was followed by his partners and several of the men belonging to Okeson's party.

Young Wild West got his lariat ready.

He expected to get an opportunity to lasso the horse when it turned to the right to reach the level.

But just as he thought the horse would turn that way a yell of terror came from Gilter.

The horse was rushing straight for the ledge.

Whether the animal had become frightened or whether it was suddenly taken with the blind-staggers will never be known.

But anyhow it plunged forward in a wobbly way until it was on the very verge of the cliff.

"There he goes!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "Ther blamed horse has run right over ther cliff!"

Gil Gilter, the leader of the band of outlaws, who had been the means of driving so many over the Jumping-off Place, had gone to his death from the very same spot.

"I guess that's about as good a way as any," remarked Jim Dart, as he followed our hero around to the spot below the ledge.

"Yes," replied Wild. "I think that is about the best way the villain could have stepped out. But it may be that he is not dead. We will go and see."

They soon reached the place where our friends had pitched their camp after being ordered out of the place by the villains.

The horse lay in a heap motionless, and under it could be seen a part of the form of the rider.

A single glance told Wild that it was all over.

He turned and rode back to the store.

His companions followed him, not one of them offering to bury the horse and rider.

Silas Okeson suggested that they let the saloonkeeper open the place and do business for a while.

"I am satisfied," said Wild. "Go ahead."

So a few minutes later there was a rush for the shanty by those who drank spirituous liquors, and that meant nearly all of them.

Okeson seldom drank enough to cause him to lose his head, but in an hour's time he was pretty well filled up.

It was getting toward night, but he gave it out that they would stay there till morning.

Wild had the prisoners placed in the store when darkness came.

The lieutenant seemed anxious to take them with him, so he helped him all he could.

Our hero knew that the trouble was about over, and that the camp would be run in much better shape now, so he told his partners that they would leave in a day or two.

That night the men under Silas Okeson got the prisoners out of the store and took them down to the Jumping-off Place.

The saloonkeeper was the only one who escaped.

The lieutenant and the land agents were sore over what happened, but they saw that it would be useless to say anything.

It was noon the next day when Okeson and his followers set out once more for Boulder.

"It will be a good camp now," Cheyenne Charlie said.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE 'MIXED-UP' MINE; OR, ARIETTA A WINNER."

Send Postal for Our Free Catalogue.

HELP YOUR COUNTRY!

STANDING BEHIND OUR SOLDIERS.

You are undertaking a great duty. The heart of the whole country is with you. Everything that you do will be watched only by those who are near and dear to you but by the whole nation besides, for this great war draws us all together.

—From President's Wilson's address to the soldiers of the National Army.

THE SECOND LIBERTY LOAN.

The bonds of the second issue of the Liberty Loan are to be issued under the act of Congress approved by the President September 24, 1917.

The amount of the issue will be \$3,000,000,000 or more; \$3,000,000,000 will be offered, and the right is reserved to allot bonds in excess of that amount to the extent of one-half of the oversubscription. That is, if \$5,000,000,000 is subscribed the right is reserved to issue \$1,000,000,000 more than the \$3,000,000,000.

The bonds will bear date November 15, 1917, and will mature November 15, 1942. But the Government reserves the right to call in and pay the bonds in full, with accrued interest, any time after 10 years after their date.

The bonds are convertible gold bonds and bear 4 per cent annual interest, the interest being payable semiannually on May 15 and November 15 of each year.

The bonds are exempt, both as to principal and interest, from all taxation now or hereafter imposed by the United States, any State, or any other possessions of the United States or by any local taxing authority, except (a) estate or inheritance taxes, and (b) graduated additional income taxes, commonly known as surtaxes, and excess-profits and war-profits taxes now or hereafter imposed. They are not liable to the ordinary Federal income tax.

The interest on an amount of bonds the principal of which does not exceed \$5,000, owned by any individual, partnership, association, or corporation, are exempted from the taxes provided for in clause (b) above.

The right is given to holders of the bonds to exchange them for bonds bearing a higher rate of interest if any such shall later be issued by the United States before the termination of the war. This conversion privilege must be exercised, if at all, within six months after the issuance of such higher-rate bonds.

THE BONDS.

The second issue of Liberty Loan Bonds will be of two kinds, registered and coupon.

The registered bonds will be registered at the Treasury in the names of their owners and will be

of the denominations of \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000, \$10,000, and \$100,000. Checks for the interest on the bonds will be mailed from the Treasury to the owners each semiannual-interest date.

The coupon bonds will be payable to bearer and will have coupons attached for the interest. They will be in denominations of \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000, and \$10,000. The coupons can be cashed like a Government check at any bank.

The coupon bonds of this loan will have only four coupons attached, representing the semiannual interest for two years. Between November 15, 1919, and May 15, 1920, the holders of coupon bonds must exchange their bonds for new bonds having full sets of coupons. These temporary bonds are issued because the work of engraving so many bonds with so large a number of coupons attached can not be completed within a reasonable time for delivery..

PURCHASE OF BONDS.

Bonds of the Second Liberty Loan can be purchased by filling out an application blank made on the form prescribed by the Secretary of the Treasury, which can be obtained from any bank or Liberty Loan committee, and sending it or having it sent to the Treasury of the United States or any Federal Reserve Bank or branch accompanied by the payment of 2 per cent of the amount of bonds applied for.

These applications must reach the Treasury Department, a Federal Reserve Bank or branch thereof, or some incorporated or trust company in the United States on or before the close of business October 27, 1917. Practically every bank in the United States will willingly receive these applications and handle the whole transaction of the purchase of bonds for any subscriber.

PAYMENT FOR BONDS.

A purchaser may pay in full for his bonds at the time of making his application or, if he so prefers, he can take advantage of the installment plan and pay 2 per cent on application, 18 per cent on November 15, 1917, 40 per cent on December 15, 1917, and the remaining 40 per cent on January 15, 1918.

Although so far as the Government is concerned the purchase price for the bonds must be paid as above, nearly every bank in the country will make arrangements by which Liberty Loan Bonds can be paid on an installment plan providing for weekly or monthly payments, and a great many employers will make the same arrangements for their employees.

Payment can be made to the Treasury Department or to any one of the Federal Reserve Banks, but purchasers are urged to make their payments to the banks or other agencies with whom they placed their subscriptions.

STARTING AT THE BOTTOM

—OR—

THE BOY WHO WON OUT

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXIII (Continued).

They got home safely, and their mother asked them if they had spent an enjoyable evening.

"Yes, indeed!" said Joe.

"I never had a nicer time in my life, mother," from Anna.

Next day Joe was summoned to the offices of the firm, and was told that he was to be promoted to the clothing stock on the third floor.

"I have been well satisfied here, Mr. Williams," said Joe, "and hate to leave you, but I think that I shall like it better in the clothing."

"I'll go up with you and introduce you to Mr. Perry. He is a friend of mine."

"Thank you, sir," said Joe.

They went up-stairs, and Mr. Williams introduced Joe to Mr. Perry, the head of the clothing department, to whom the boy handed the note from Mr. Wright.

Mr. Perry read the note and then nodded.

"You are to start in here at once," he said. "Very well; I can use you, I guess."

"You will find him quick and apt, Mr. Perry," said Mr. Williams. "He has been in my department, and I am sorry to lose him."

"Ah, indeed!" Then he told Joe to follow him, and he conducted the youth to a man near the center of the room and introduced Joe to him, saying:

"Give him all the information in your power, Mr. Harris. Teach him the business thoroughly and carefully."

"Very well, sir," replied Harris.

Then Mr. Perry went back and rejoined Mr. Williams, who told him a good deal about Joe, and asked him to help the boy in every possible way.

"He's a fine young fellow," said Mr. Williams, "and he'll develop into a splendid salesman, I am confident."

"I'll do the very best by him that I can," was the reply.

One day, about a week after Joe went to work in the clothing department, a man came in and wanted to look at some suits. Mr. Harris took him in hand, and the customer soon found a suit that pleased him; but he was very particular about the fit, he said, and must try the suit on.

"Then you can make any alterations that are necessary before I take the suit away," he said.

"Very well," said Mr. Harris.

The man went into the little room and changed his old suit for the new one. He seemed to be a long time at it, and Mr. Harris wondered what was keeping him.

The fact was, that the little room in question was made by curtains of denim-cloth, and the man had donned the new suit and had then slipped out underneath the cloth at the opposite side from the entrance, and had made his way around till he was in the aisle leading toward the elevator.

Just then Joe happened to catch sight of him, and recognized him as the customer Mr. Harris had been waiting on. Instantly he understood the matter. The man was trying to slip away with the new suit.

Joe stepped out in front of the man and said:

"Wait a moment, sir, please!" Then lifting his voice, Joe called out: "Mr. Harris!"

The would-be thief realized that the game was up unless he could escape by making a bold dash, and he evidently decided to do this, for he leaped forward and attempted to get past Joe.

He did not succeed, however, for the boy caught hold of him, and he held him in spite of his struggles.

"Let go!" snarled the man, striking at Joe fiercely. "Let go, I say!"

Mr. Harris and several of the clerks came running up, and some customers gathered around, watching the affair in amazement.

"What's the matter? What is this, Joe?" cried Mr. Harris.

"This is your customer, Mr. Harris!" panted Joe, hanging onto the man grimly; "he was trying to slip away with the suit of clothes."

"By Jove, you're right!" cried Mr. Harris. "Help Joe, a couple of you men. And some one run out for an officer."

A couple of the salesmen seized hold of the would-be thief, and he was led, still struggling, back to the little curtained room, where he was forced to doff the new suit and don his old.

By this time the officer was on hand, and the man was turned over to his custody.

"You go along with the officer, Mr. Harris," said Mr. Perry, "and make the charge against this fellow."

"Very well, sir," and Mr. Harris accompanied the two out of the store.

"Joe," said Mr. Perry, "you did well. But for you

that fellow would have got away with that suit of clothes."

Joe blushed.

"I'm glad that I was successful in heading him off, sir," he said.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JOE WINS OUT.

That evening Mr. Perry went up to the offices of the firm and told how Joe had prevented the would-be thief from getting away with the suit of clothes.

"Joe seems to be always in the right place at the right time," said Mr. Wright.

"Yes, indeed," from Mr. Winner.

"He is a bright boy," said Mr. Perry. "He will develop into a fine business man."

"That is what we think," agreed Mr. Wright.

"Well, give him every assistance, Mr. Perry."

"I will do so."

A little later Joe was sent for, and went up to the offices of the firm.

Mr. Wright and Mr. Winner told Joe that they learned of his action in capturing the would-be thief, and they complimented him in hearty terms.

"You did well, my boy!" declared Mr. Wright, "and we appreciate your action, I assure you."

"Yes, indeed!" from Mr. Winner.

"I did only what I felt to be my duty," was the modest reply.

Then Joe went back to work, feeling very happy. He felt that he had done only his duty, but he was glad to know that his action was appreciated.

The incident was not generally known throughout the store, and Anna had not heard of it. Joe did not say anything about it to her, as he was not the boy to blow his own horn.

After supper that evening Dave Wiggs called. He was in the habit of calling pretty often nowadays, for he had taken a great liking to Anna. And she liked him, so it was an even thing on that score. Mrs. Barton and Joe were glad to have him come, for Joe knew Dave to be a good, sensible fellow and a good worker.

"Well, Joe, how do you feel since your tussle with the thief?" Dave asked, after he had been there a little while.

Mrs. Barton and Anna uttered exclamations of astonishment.

"What are you talking about, Dave?" cried Anna.

"Did you have trouble with a thief, son?" asked Mrs. Barton.

"Oh, now I've gone and let the cat out of the bag, Joe, I guess," said Dave. "You hadn't told them. I didn't know."

"But you must tell us now," insisted Anna.

"I supposed that Anna had heard about it in the store to-day," said Dave.

"No, I didn't hear anything."

"Tell us, son," said his mother.

So Joe told them about the capture of the man who had attempted to get away with the suit of clothes. They listened with interest, and Anna's eyes sparkled with pride as she said:

"I'm proud of you, brother! You certainly did a good thing in capturing the thief."

Dave was still in the inspection department, but hoped to get into stock soon.

He stayed till half-past ten and then took his departure.

The three talked a few minutes about the thief that Joe had captured, and then they went to bed.

Two weeks later Dave Wiggs was given a place in the dress goods department, and he was delighted.

He came up to the Barton home the evening of his first day in stock, and told them all about it.

"I guess I'm going to rise, too, the same as Joe has done," he said, with a grin. "I think I see myself a member of the firm in a few years from now!"

"I wish that you might be," said Anna.

"Yes, and Joe, too," from her mother.

"Oh, there's no doubt at all but what Joe will be a member of the firm in time," said Dave, earnestly.

Joe laughed so heartily that Dave looked at him reproachfully.

"What's so funny?" he asked.

"Why, what you said about me becoming a member of the firm in time. That is about as funny a thing as you could possibly say, Dave."

"I don't think so," with a shake of the head. "You stand so well with Mr. Wright and Mr. Winner that it is not at all unlikely that you may be taken into the firm in time."

"Pshaw!" scoffed Joe.

"Then, too, you have another chance," said Dave.

"What is it?" wonderingly.

Dave laughed, and then he leaned over and whispered the words "Jessica Winner" in Anna's ear.

Anna nodded and smiled.

"That's so; you are right, Dave. I hope it will turn out that way, anyhow."

Joe blushed.

"I know what you mean," he said, "but you are barking up the wrong tree."

"That remains to be seen," said Dave.

Joe was advanced steadily, until at the age of twenty-one he was the manager of all the retail department on the ground floor. At that age he was master of the business in all its details, and understood what was required of him thoroughly.

That he was honest and trustworthy his employer had long since learned, and they trusted him implicitly. They paid him a fine salary, and he was saving the money. In one year he would have enough to enable him to buy a one-sixteenth share in the store, and Mr. Wright and Mr. Winner had both assured him that they would be glad to let him into the firm, with the privilege of increasing his holdings until he had a one-fourth interest.

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

At Mardella Springs station on the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railway, an express train of five coaches, bound for Ocean City, Md., ran over a two-year-old girl in the center of the tracks. Engineer Wallace, on the flyer, which was running about sixty miles an hour, immediately applied the brakes. Flagman Hall, when the train came to a standstill, ran down the tracks and picked up little Annie Kosh Kery, sound asleep on the ties. She was unhurt.

The largest duplex submarine telephone cable in existence was recently laid between Keansburg, N.J., and Annadale, Staten Island, N. Y. In all, the cable measures 28,248 feet, and is one of the double-armored type containing 74 pairs of No. 16 and 12 pairs of No. 22 wire. Loading pots have been installed at five points, the splices being tested for water tightness by dry air pumped into the sleeves before filling with paraffine. The locations of the pots are indicated by spar buoys.

The territory to be acquired by the Government in Harford County, Md., for a new Army proving ground site as a substitute for the Kent Island site will have a thirty-mile range and will include the entire southeastern part of the county and a small section of Baltimore County. The range is to start at and include all of Spesutia Island, where there are several large farms and some fine fishing and ducking shores. It will also include the famous ducking shores in the neighborhood of Bengies. The idea is to have two fifteen-mile ranges, so that guns may be fired in two directions at the same time.

The United States naval training station established at Minneapolis, Minn., recently at Dunwoody Industrial Institute has developed rapidly. Five hundred bluejackets and petty officers from all parts of the country are now in attendance, a hundred more are coming, and the quota will soon reach one thousand. Rear Admiral Leigh S. Palmer, U. S. N., chief of the Bureau of Navigation, made an official inspection of the Dunwoody detail, and reported in most favorable terms. The commandant is Ensign Colby Dodge, U. S. N., retired. The station is training cooks, bakers, blacksmiths, copper-smiths, carpenters, electricians, gas-engine men, machinists, and what has lately been ordered, the most important class of all, radio operators.

Successful experiments with a telephone apparatus installed on a railroad car were carried out recently by a representative of the signal department of the

Canadian Government Railways and the inventor of the device, the former in the car itself and the latter in the dispatcher's office in the Moncton yard. The transmission in this system of communication is made through wheel and axle without the assistance of any contributing medium. Reports of the tests declare that the communication established was in every way satisfactory, although the train was in motion. It is said there was no difficulty in hearing distinctly every word of the messages exchanged. The experiment was tried on a double-track line where the rails are properly "bonded" for the block-signal system, but it is claimed that equally good results can be obtained on any track where the rails are similarly "bonded" without regard to the presence or absence of a block-signal installation.

The magnitude of the war, as a whole, is repeated in every phase of its activity, and in no way more so than in its instruments of war. As we have more than once remarked in these columns, it has been necessary to multiply our units of measurement by from 10 to 100. Weapons which were thought massive and powerful in 1914 are puny in 1917. Thus, heavy artillery, whose weight tied it down to fixed fortification, is now moving merrily over the field of battle. Where, formerly, we talked in millions, now we talk freely in billions. Before the war 25 to 30 knots was battle-cruiser speed—today we have such ships of from 150,000 to 200,000 horse-power steaming at 35 to 40 knots. A notable instance of this growth is in the field of aviation, where the British have aeroplanes of 600 horsepower and the Italians have gone up to 1,000. And the end is not yet.

The safe delivery of eggs to be sent through the mail will be insured and their period of freshness prolonged at the same time by the use of a new system which has recently been patented and is now being called to the attention of egg dealers and shippers. The patent is on a machine which wraps the eggs in a long strip of paper, the eggs being entirely covered by the paper which is twisted about them, making them resemble a length of sausages more than anything else. The paper in which they have been encased has been dampened, and in this condition the eggs are draped around a collapsible wire frame. As the paper dries it becomes taut, and the eggs are securely held between the arms of the frame. When they are placed in a box for shipment they are supported so that they cannot come in contact with each other nor the box, and they are thus enabled to withstand a rough experience which would be disastrous under ordinary conditions. The frames are made in one-dozen and crate sizes.

GOING IT BLIND

OR UNDER SEALED ORDERS

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVI.

CHASED BY AN ARAB OUTLAW.

For a few moments the young Americans were paralyzed with amazement and dismay.

The sudden appearance of the Arabs had taken them wholly by surprise.

They had not been expecting anything of this kind.

Doubtless the youths would have surrendered, as ordered, but the decision was taken out of their hands.

The horses the young Americans were mounted on were thoroughbreds, and the sudden appearance of the fierce-looking Arabs frightened the animals, and they whirled and dashed back along the open space, knocking down a couple of Arabs who were in the way and causing them to howl loudly with pain and rage.

The girls had nearly been unseated by the sudden action of the animals, but by seizing hold of the horses' manes, they kept their seats, and were soon out of the oasis and dashing away toward Fez at the best speed of the thoroughbreds—which was a pretty lively clip, for the horses were speedy as the wind.

At the girls' heels came the three youths.

As the three were turning out of the opening leading into the oasis, there sounded several rifle-shots, and three or four bullets whistled past the youths.

The next moment the three were out of sight of the Arabs, and were safe from further shots.

"Phew!" whistled Bob. "That was a close shave!"

"So it was," nodded Fred. "They would have got us but for the action of the horses."

"You are right," agreed Charlie. "Jove, I thought the girls were going to be thrown when the horses whirled!"

"It would have been all up with us if they had."

"True; but we are all right now."

Fred looked sober, and glanced back over his shoulder.

"I don't know about that," he said. "It will probably come to a test of the speed and staying qualities of horses. If ours are the better, then we will escape, and if theirs are the better, we will be captured."

"You think they have horses, then?" asked Bob.

"Oh, yes. They'll come charging out of the oasis in a few moments, and—there they come now!"

Sure enough, out of the oasis came a dozen horsemen, and they were urging their animals to their best speed.

"Jove, you were right, Fred!" said Charlie.

"Yes, I knew they'd be after us."

"They seem to have good horses," said Bob.

"You are right; but ours are good, too."

"I don't believe that ours will prove to have the staying qualities that theirs undoubtedly have," said Charlie. "They are not inured to hard usage, and so are not toughened up."

"Well, we'll hope for the best, anyhow," said Fred.

"I have a revolver," said Bob; "and if they do overhaul us, I'll give them a fight."

"I have a revolver also," said Charlie.

"I haven't," said Fred; "but I wish that I did have."

"Well, we have a dozen shots between us," said Bob; "and we can drop a few of the scoundrels, unless they pick us off with those old rifles while out of range of our revolvers."

"They can't hold them out and take aim while riding," said Fred; "and if they stopped and dismounted, we could get out of range before they could fire."

"That's so," agreed Bob. "I guess that if they overhaul us, we'll get to fire a few shots into them."

The youths were now close at the heels of the girls, and Elsie looked back and asked in a trembling voice:

"Can we outrun them?"

"Oh, yes," replied Fred, with assumed confidence.

"Thank goodness for that!"

On they dashed, and after them came the Arabs.

When they had been going fifteen or twenty minutes, it was seen that the Arabs were gaining, slowly but surely.

"Don't let the girls know it," said Charlie in a low voice.

"But they will look back and see it themselves," said Bob.

"No; you tell them to keep their eyes straight ahead, Fred," said Charlie. "Then they won't discover that the rascals are gaining."

"I'll do that," said Fred. He lifted up his voice and said:

"Keep your eyes to the front, girls. Don't look back, for that might cause you to let your horses stumble or take the wrong path. We will look out for the Arabs."

"All right, Fred," came in Lucy's voice.

The youths kept a sharp lookout behind them, and as they saw the Arabs drawing closer and closer their hearts sank.

"Maybe their horses will give out," said Bob, hopefully.

This really turned out to be the case. Doubtless the Arabs had ridden their horses hard recently, and they had gone into the race pretty well fagged out.

At any rate, it was seen that the pursuers were beginning to lose the ground they had gained. And as soon as the Arabs noted this fact, they brought their horses to a sudden stop, leaped to the ground and, leveling their rifles, took quick aim and fired a volley at the fugitives.

Fortunately the Americans were out of range, and the bullets fell short.

The girls were surprised and frightened when they heard the rifle-shots, and turned their heads and looked back with terror in their eyes.

"It's all right," called out Charlie; "they have given up the pursuit, and that was their farewell to us."

"Oh, I am so glad," said Elsie.

"You can slacken speed now," said Fred. "They won't follow us any farther."

The girls brought their horses down to an ordinary pace, and the youths did the same.

Then they discussed the affair with considerable interest. Fred said that he knew that there were wild bands of Arabs in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains, but that he had never heard of them coming so far north before.

They rode steadily onward, and an hour before sundown they arrived at the Sultan's palace, and Fred knocked upon the gate.

When it swung open, they rode up the winding driveway to the front of the palace, and as they came to a stop at the piazza, they caught sight of a young man sitting in a wicker-chair, smoking a cigarette and eyeing them with an air of commingled assurance and bravado.

This youth was no other than Julian Felix

CHAPTER XVII.

JULIAN FELIX ON HAND.

"Just look at that, will you!" half-gasped Bob.

"It's Julian Felix!" from Charlie.

"The fellow that tried to make an end of you, eh?" from Fred.

"Oh, I am afraid it means more trouble for you Charlie!" breathed Elsie.

"I have no fears, Elsie," was the reply; "I shall keep my eyes on him hereafter. I know he is capable of almost anything, and will act accordingly."

The youths leaped down and assisted the girls to alight; then the horses were led away by Moorish servants, and the five climbed the steps to the piazza. The girls went on into the palace and to their rooms, but the three youths paused near Julian and looked at him with interest.

"How are you, gentlemen?" said Julian, emitting a mouthful of smoke. "Fine evening, eh?"

"You cowardly scoundrel!" cried Charlie. "You did all you could to injure me."

"Easy, easy, Charlie, dear boy!" said Julian, calmly. "Don't make charges unless you are prepared to back them up."

"I can back them up, all right. I back my words with my fists."

"But I mean that you should not make charges unless you are able to produce proof. Can you do that?"

"No, I can't; but I am positive that you——"

"You mean that you suspect me, that's all. Well, that wouldn't go in a court of justice, you know, and so I would advise that you say no more about it."

"I'd give him a good thrashing, anyway, Charlie, if I were you," said Bob.

"What good would that do?" said Julian. "And, besides, it is not at all a sure thing that he is able to do that little trick."

The assurance and insolence of the fellow was certainly superb.

"I could do it easily enough," said Charlie, angrily. Then he attacked the man, and a fierce fight ensued. But Julian was no match for our hero, and he received a terrific beating. When it was ended Julian shouted:

"I'll get square with you for this! I'll kill you!"

Charlie made a gesture of disdain, and then said:

"When did you get here?"

"About two hours ago," answered Julian, sulkily.

"What do you expect to do here?"

"I expect to go with the expedition that starts in the morning," sneered the other, lighting a cigarette.

"What!" gasped Charlie.

"You heard me," nodding and blowing smoke out through his nostrils.

"But that expedition is being sent at my request, and I——"

"You are not in command, though, and I am going along. I have the Sultan's promise that I may do so."

"Ah! Then you have seen him!"

"Yes, and a fine fellow he is, too. He said right away that it would not be fair for one newspaper man to be permitted to accompany the expedition in search of Raisuli and another one be barred. I quite agreed with him, of course, and the result is that I am going along."

(To be continued.)

NEWS OF THE DAY

FISH AS A WAR FOOD.

With a view to the mobilization of the fish industry, representatives of wholesale fish distributors from all parts of the country began a conference recently with officials of the Food Administration and the Bureau of Fisheries, New York, Boston, Gloucester, St. Louis, the Gulf Coast, Lake Erie and the Pacific Coast were represented.

A campaign is planned to popularize frozen fish. War-time conscription of ships and men from the fishery fleet and an intensified demand for fish to release more meat for export to the Allies have developed some adverse conditions in the industry. It is believed that by popularizing frozen fish it will be far easier for the distributors to handle the supply to best advantage.

SISTERS REACH THE END OF THEIR "ROMANCE TRAIL."

The Llewellen sisters, Alexandria and Gloria, who arrived in San Pedro, Cal., dressed in men's clothes and on their way to "somewhere," adventure bound, have reached the end of their "romance trail."

Alexandria, who is the youngest, was shipped back to Stockton to face parental ire, while her sister, unfortunate in being over age, was transferred to the city jail.

The girls left Stockton via the hobo route several weeks ago and sought the thrills of travel astride old tank cars and inside empty box cars. When arrested they gave the names of Ross.

The girls' father wired transportation for Alexandria.

THE PROPER SPIRIT.

A company of Plattsburgers was drawn up to learn how many of them were to graduate as officers.

The names of those who had passed were read out. The officer in charge said:

"The rest of you may go. In my opinion you are not good for anything, but I may be mistaken, and I hope the future will show that I am. There is one way for you to prove this now. You can enter the ranks and take a chance of working up. Any who desire to do this will please step three paces forward."

Three men stepped forward.

"I see," said the instructor officer, "that I made three mistakes. I am sorry I missed you three men. You certainly have the right spirit."

A REINFORCED RIVER.

Floating on the crest of an artificial floor, a fleet of Ohio River barges recently carried down to Cincinnati something like 12,000 tons of coal. The

Ohio River never before under similar conditions has seen such an event in August and it is only because man stepped in to aid nature, that the thing occurred. As always is the case in August the river was in extremely low water. Boats drawing more than a couple of feet normally are tied up. But the United States Army Engineering Corps, wishing to demonstrate the supreme value of the river as an artery of traffic in war-time, has stepped in with an illuminating illustration of what can be done even in these weeks of scant flow.

Dams holding back pools along the Big Sandy, the Kanawha and the Upper Ohio rivers were opened recently and surplus water was allowed to run out. An artificial crest of from three to six feet was formed and on this crest snub-nosed argosies went down the river bearing the coal to the Queen City. Without the presence of the dams which the government has already completed, this movement and others which will undoubtedly follow, could not be made.

ANOTHER WAR WEAPON.

After a murderous artillery fire has swept away the ordinary barbed wire entanglements in front of a trench, there is nothing to impede the onrush of troops except machine-gun and infantry fire, accompanied, at certain times, by well-placed barrage fire from the rear. Under most conditions this resistance is sufficient to deplete the ranks of an invading force, but the fact that the first, second and third line of trenches may be captured in a single charge is proof that gun fire alone cannot dissipate a body of troops. There have been numerous occasions in this war where troops of both sides have deliberately plunged through a heavy barrage fire to carry a line of trenches.

Accordingly, Enid S. Wales of Detroit, Mich., has invented a novel projectile which shoots barbed wire instead of bullets. His idea is to first impede the progress of an onrushing body of troops by spreading coils of barbed wire in front of them and then to attack them with infantry and machine gunfire. The inventor claims that his projectile will distribute masses of barbed wire over a large area, enmeshing a whole company of troops.

Briefly, the projectile consists of a stem which fits the barrel of a trench mortar, a central chamber containing the explosive charge, into which chamber the stem fits, and several hollow caps which carry the coils of barbed wire, the inner ends of which are secured to the body of the shell. When the projectile explodes, the caps containing the barbed wire shoot out like bullets, distributing the wire in tangled masses. A time fuse is provided so that the distance can be gauged.

WILD WEST WEEKLY

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Good Current News Articles

Dr. D. G. Long of Reading, Pa., had a narrow escape while on a fishing trip to Fortescue, N. J., where he hooked a four-foot shark which bit fast to his clothing when he hauled it into the boat. Charles Cole and Felix Oehring, who accompanied the Reading doctor, cut the shark's head off before its hold could be released.

A plant for converting shark skins into leather is to be erected at St. Petersburg, Fla., by a corporation of Seattle, Wash., which maintains shark fisheries there and in Alaska. There are at least ten varieties of sharks, namely, the blue, basking, pilgrim, porpoise, bone, man-eater, tiger, hammer-head, thrasher and the mackerel shark, whose skin can be turned into good commercial leather. At the Florida station catching, skinning and tanning can be made an all-year-round industry.

The New York City Department of Health has unearthed a sensational fraud in the manufacture of fake salvarsan. The imitation, which was put up in New York and sold widely throughout this country as well as in Canada, Mexico and Central America, consists of ordinary table salt colored with a little aniline dye. The package, circular, ampoul and every visible detail of the original article are cunningly imitated. It is believed that at least 50,000 doses of the fake article have been sold.

A leading manufacturer of electric heating devices has recently submitted an electric oven to the War Department for possible adoption for army cooking. This oven is designed to take care of baking, boiling and frying operations necessary in the feeding of about 150 men. It is unique in that it is the first oven to be designed to perform all of these various cooking operations at one time. The hot-plate which is bracketed to the oven will accommodate the standard United States army coffee receptacle. The oven is rated at 15 kilowatts.

Some years ago, in order to make their inheritance of land more simple and secure, our Government commissioned Dr. Charles A. Eastman, a Sioux Indian, to rename more than 15,000 Sioux with their family names. The task was a tremendous one and full of difficulties, says the Los Angeles Times. Where possible Dr. Eastman kept the original Sioux name of some member of a family, as in bestowing the name "Matoska," meaning "White Bear," on the family of that chief. Sometimes the combination of wife's name and husband's name has produced a musical result, such as "Winona Otana." The favorite name for woman means "she who has a beautiful home," which Dr. Eastman has Anglicized in the patronymic "Goodhouse." But by far the hardest task was in finding new names for the absurdities of Indian nomenclature. "Bobtailed Coyote" was a young Indian who has come to prefer himself as "Robert T. Wolf." After a long struggle with "Rotten Pumpkin" Dr. Eastman at last recorded the owner of the name on the tribal records under the noncommittal title of "Robert Pumpkin."

Grins and Chuckles

Floor Walker—Hurry out, madam! The store's afire. Mrs. Bargains—Oh, is it? Then I'll just wait for the fire sale.

Visitor—Nature always maintains a balance. Editor—That's right. Spring poems begin coming in just as the coal runs short.

"They say there's luck in odd numbers." "I don't believe it. I know a man who got nine years in prison for having three wives."

"Papa is the captain of our ship and mamma is the pilot." "And what are you, my little man?" "I guess I must be the compass. They're always boxing me."

"Is that little boy I saw you playing with this afternoon a good boy, Willie?" asked his mother. "No," replied Willie, "he's not much good, but he's the only kid on the block that I can lick."

"Strike three," said the umpire. "Batter out!" "Whad d'ye mean, out?" protested the batter. "Yuh big stiff, that last one was a mile outside." "You're fined ten dollars," said the umpire. "Do you understand that?" "Sure, I get you now. Money talks."

"Young man," said the office manager, "if you knew as much about the business of this firm as you do about baseball, you'd be holding down my job." "I know that, sir," replied the office boy. "And if you'd make your business as interesting as baseball you'd have kids beggin' for a chance to work for you and willing to pay for the privilege."

THE SHRIEKING SPECTER.

By Howard Austin

Two medical students were passing through an obscure street in Paris.

"What are you looking at, Charles? We must hurry along if we get to our destination before dark. And we shall not be able to find our way through the old pile if daylight is gone."

Charles Fanleigh withdrew his gaze from the object upon which it had been riveted, and said in answer to his companion's remark:

"I never see a poorly dressed, delicate woman in the streets, Geoff, but I think of my lost sister Annabel."

As the young man spoke, a young girl toward whom his attention had been drawn, staggered across the sidewalk with a smothered shriek, as a man, well attired and imitating the air of a gentleman, but whose face and figure proclaimed him of a class most depraved—stopped suddenly before her and accosted her, then rudely laying his hand upon her shoulder, wheeled her about as though he would force her to accompany him.

Seeing he was observed, however, he withdrew his grasp, and as the girl reeled in terror against the railing of a doorway, and stood there with the pallor of death upon her face, the man strode hurriedly away.

Charles made as though he would follow him, but the fainting condition of the young woman stayed him.

"Can we aid you?" asked Geoffrey Delamare in tones most deferential. "My friend and I are about to lunch within this cafe. It is very quiet there. Will you not permit them to serve you a cup of coffee? You appear very weak."

And indeed she was. As she essayed to recover herself and walk on, after gently thanking them and declining the offer, a faintness seemed to sweep over her, and she swayed and would have fallen to the pavement had they not caught her in time. They compelled her to enter the restaurant, and after partaking of refreshment she seemed to be much better, and the large, dark eyes filled with tears of gratitude as she bade the gentleman adieu and again started on her way.

There is, or was, not so many miles from the city of Paris, a structure, partly in utter ruin, partly maintaining to the outward eye the appearance of an ancient chateau. The grounds surrounding it were now a wilderness; half of it lay buried in undergrowth, and the portion still standing was windowless, doorless and ivy-grown.

A small tower at one side of it was the only opaque outline that struck against the horizon. In this the windows were mere slits and so thickly obscured by the ivy that light could not strike through it.

A terrible crime had been once committed within its mill-dewed, moss-grown walls, and ever after it

had been shunned by pleasure-seekers and lovers of the antique.

The ghostly associations of the place and the reports of the shrieking apparition that fluttered through the crumbling walls after the awful murder had been enacted there, rendered it desolate and unpopular indeed.

Our friends, however, undaunted by the repeated asseverations concerning these spectral rehearsals, determined to pass a night within a lofty room in the smaller tower.

"I cannot help thinking of the poor girl we met to-day," remarked Charley Fanleigh. "I wish the 'shrieking specter' would appear to drive her from my thoughts."

Suddenly they heard an awful shriek, and they started off in the direction of the sound.

At last they discerned in a distant section of the structure something white flitting hither and yon in an uncertain, giddy fashion.

They followed and confronted the apparition, which, upon their approach, threw up its arms and uttered another shrill scream.

Charles advanced toward her and spoke:

"What is it you do here?"

"She? The loveliest little angel that ever blessed a mother's eyes. My pet—my child, in the convent where that wretch placed her." As she spoke the woman swayed back and forth in agony. For the moment reason seemed reigning within her.

"What wretch?" again asked Geoffrey.

"He, the man this hand sent to judgment. His bones lie in yonder lake. I overheard his plans with his son. They had stolen her—they had her money—they were to murder her here. I followed the old man. Ha! ha! I did away with him. But the little sunshine I carried away with me, here in my nun's cloak—see, here she is—safe!"

And the woman drew forth from some hidden receptacle a small bundle of what appeared to be a child's wearing apparel.

As Charles Fanleigh's eyes fell upon this strange treasure—the woman revealed, he darted forward with a cry.

"My!" he exclaimed, "those are the identical clothes my baby sister Annabel wore on the day of her disappearance." He seized and examined one of the sleeve-clasps. Yes, the initials were there that he sought. But the woman resented his touch like a wild animal. She flung herself away from him, while the eyes glared upon him again in direst insanity. They recoiled, and she turned and fled, the night air rent as she went with the same unearthly shrieks that had heralded her approach.

"Come, let us follow!" cried Charles.

"It is my mind she has escaped from L—— Asylum," said Geoffrey, as they hastened after the receding figure.

"Or perchance the convent of ——, which is not far from here."

The night previous to the events just recorded,

a young girl, with pale, terrified face, might have been seen fleeing through the garden in front of a stylish modern house, built in the villa style, in one of the suburbs of Paris.

She wore no hat, and her hair, loosened from its fastenings, swept behind her as she ran.

"May heaven help me now," she sobbed beneath her breath, as she fled down the steps to the roadside.

On she speeded till at last she reached a small, plain cottage, which she entered, having been admitted by a young girl of about her own age. From this she presently emerged attired now in a plain walking hat and wrap, and swept on toward the railroad station, where she took a train for the city.

This young girl was none other than the one who, during her search for work, on the following day, so attracted the attention of Charles Fanleigh.

She had not traversed many squares, however, before a closely veiled lady stopped her and inquired the way to a certain street.

The girl obligingly turned, at the request of the person, into a narrow side street to indicate the route required.

She had taken but a few steps after turning the corner before she experienced a sudden and overwhelming faintness. She felt herself sinking rapidly in unconsciousness and being borne she knew not whither.

Our friends, Charley and Geoffrey, after their midnight adventure, had hired a conveyance and were being rapidly driven into town. It was now about three o'clock in the morning.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the rapid approach of a close carriage driven by two strong, fast horses.

As the coach drew near, the door suddenly sprang open and the form of a girl precipitated itself through the opening, while in a voice indescribably despairing she cried out:

"Help! Help!"

"Drive after them!" was the command Geoffrey gave the driver.

The young men were armed, and when at last they were abreast of the carriage, Charles, aiming his revolver at the driver, shouted, "Stop, or you are a dead man!"

Instantly the young man sprang to the ground and tore open the door of the coach.

"Jump!" called Charles to the girl, holding out his arms to her, while Geoffrey leveled his revolver at the malignant visage of her abductor. So prompt and unhesitating had been the performance of the young men the girl was beyond his reach before he could seize her. As Charles supported her trembling form to their coupe something fluttered from her dress to the ground. He stooped to recover it. It was a delicately embroidered handkerchief of finest linen worn almost to a web. Across the corner wrought in blue floss was the name "Annabel."

Charles' attention was arrested even in the midst of the excitement at sight of this name, and he shot a keen glance into the girl's face.

"Can it be your name is Annabel?" he asked with eager interest.

The girl sighed.

"I do not know," was her somewhat remarkable reply. "I cannot say. I have sometimes believed so, but I am called Josephine."

Charles was obliged to leave her at this point and return to his friend's assistance. But he determined to solve the mystery surrounding this girl.

The man whose victim they had secured had, by a stealthy movement, thrust Geoffrey's revolver aside and succeeded in emerging from the carriage, but his assailant had recovered himself, and, seizing him by the throat, crowded him to the earth, while the driver of the coupe quickly disarmed him.

Charles now saw there was still another occupant in the carriage.

This was a woman, whose dark wrappings and heavy veil had completely obscured her from view.

"Let me go!" howled the miserable wretch, whom Geoffrey had completely pinioned.

"Not until you make plain your whole business with this young lady. Who is she, and by what right do you accompany her against her will?"

"Ask her mother there. She's nothing to me."

"Are you the lady's mother, madam?" asked Charles Fanleigh.

"I've taken care of the good-for-nothing long enough to be, though I ain't, no more than he's her father," returned the woman in a coarse language that evinced her degraded origin.

"Tell us what you know of the girl and we may protect you from the extreme penalty of the law. If you do not——" and Charles looked all he did not say.

"Hold your tongue!" shouted her accomplice, turning his murderous eyes upon the woman. But evidently the law had greater terrors for her than this man.

"Was the girl placed at the age of four in the Convent of ——?" asked Charles of the woman.

"She was."

"She was placed there by this man's father, who gave her name to the abbess as Adele Fanville, and she was afterward stealthily removed from the institution; all this is so, is it not?"

The woman assented.

Having bound their prisoner securely within the coach, the young men lost no time in making their way to the city, where both Otto Reynard and his assistant were put under arrest.

Otto Reynard followed her, and the woman had so disguised herself that the girl was easily trapped and rendered unconscious by the use of an anesthetic.

Otto Reynard is serving his term in prison—a punishment none too great for the villainy of his life.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

LONDON TO NEW YORK IN ONE DAY.

From London to New York by aeroplane in one day. This is the scheme of J. A. Whitehead, Governing Director of Whitehead Aircraft, Ltd., and he told a daily sketch reporter that it is to be carried to a successful conclusion.

"When our plans are fully matured," he said, "we shall make a trip which will be the most sensational in the whole history of aviation. The aeroplane will be piloted by Herbert Sykes, who anticipates leaving Hanworth Park, Feltham Middlesex, at dawn and reaching New York before night. The trip will be accomplished on a specially designed very powerful Whitehead machine which is being built at our Middlesex factory." Edgar Middleton will accompany Mr. Sykes as navigator. He has served in an Essex regiment and was sub-lieutenant. Both are immensely enthusiastic and confident.

PAPER FAMINE IN GERMANY.

The shortage of print paper in Berlin is so serious that many of the city's important newspapers were unable to appear on Saturday, according to Berlin advices to the Exchange Telegraph's Amsterdam correspondent. Other newspapers were issued only in four-page form, with the prospects for a paper supply so poor that they may soon have to stop publication altogether.

No Berlin newspapers reached Holland except forty copies of the Tageblatt, says the correspondent. Virtually all the newspapers in Saxony have ceased publication for an indefinite period.

The situation, says the Tageblatt, is serious. The advertising of the new German war loan, it points out, will naturally be impossible under these conditions, as well as the printing of advertising of other kinds.

THE UNITED STATES WILL HAVE 1,600 MERCHANT SHIPS.

The United States has today 458 ships of over 1,500 deadweight tons with an aggregate tonnage of 2,871,359, either engaged in or capable of participating in foreign trade. There are also 117 ships of a tonnage of 700,285 of German and Austrian origin. The United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation has commandeered nearly 400 steel ships of more than 2,500,000 tons, which are being completed or under contract for construction in American yards. The Board's Fleet Corporation has also contracted for 636 ships with a tonnage of 3,124,700. Totaled these figures show that the United States will have near the end of 1918 a merchant fleet of more than 1,600 ships aggregating 9,200,000 tons to carry its foreign commerce, as

compared with an overseas marine of 1,614,222 tons on June 30, 1914, scarcely a month before the European war began.

The tonnage referred to is exclusive of that engaged on inland waters, unsuitable coastwise ships and small craft operating along the coast and in bays and harbors, and does not, of course, include the prospective additional program of the Emergency Fleet Corporation.

The fleet in prospect is already becoming a reality. Several of the commandeered ships are already taking cargo; others will leave the ways in increasing numbers with each succeeding month. The ships for which the Shipping Board has contracted are under construction and the first launching is expected within 60 to 90 days.

A NEW U-BOAT DETECTOR.

A radio submarine detector, designed to discover the presence of submerged craft at a considerable distance and thwart surprise attacks on American ships, has been invented by Lieutenant William R. Russel, formerly chief of the wireless division of the Seventh Reserve Officer, New York Aero Wireless Corps, who is in Denver, Colo.

Lieutenant Russel describes his device as follows: "It is a mica tube three feet long and six inches in diameter, and there is a rock salt lens midway in its length. Through this lens are projected radiations from a radium audion. The lens eliminates the ultra-violet rays and light waves and permits only the infra-red rays and radium electric waves to pass through. The infra-red rays are the most powerful of the heating waves.

"These concentrated rays and waves pass invisibly through the air from the radio projector until they strike the metallic surface of the hunted submarine. Then they are reflected invisibly back upon a new type of selenium cell, to which is connected a registering device.

"The idea is that this instrument or radium ray projector, as I call it, mounted on an airplane or a chaser, locates the submerged underwater craft by means of radium electric rays. The airplane, for instance, soars over the sea and the observer keeps sweeping the waters with the instrument. The minute the rays strike the hull of the U-boat they are reflected back to the radio-active selenium cell, the operator gets the signal through the wireless head-gear he wears, and fires his machine gun or drops a bomb at the spot indicated.

"It is only reasonable to believe that in the majority of cases the U-boat will be fairly hit, for submarines generally do not go much below 200 feet beneath the surface, and the rays from the 'radium gun' can penetrate the sea to a much greater depth."

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

BIG YEAR FOR PEANUTS.

There are 2,001,000 acres planted to peanuts this year! The statement comes from the Agricultural Department, and just note the exactitude of the count! Not a rough guess of two million acres, but an actual count that tacks on another thousand acres! Texas alone will gather a goober crop from 600,000 acres! The greatest crop of peanuts since the first circus traveled across Chaldea 5,794 years ago is in the Autumnal promise. If the yield of peanuts averages only 100 bushels to the acre there will be over 200,000,000 bushels of this joyous ground fruit added to the country's food stock.

Peanuts are used in these enlightened days in more than a score of different forms of food service. There are many people who rate the goober above the chestnut, the almond, the pecan, or the walnut. It is a commodity retailed all over these United States from a million grocery stores and from ten thousand pushcarts. It is exported by shiploads. The boys in the camps and likewise in the trenches will not be short-rationed on this particular delicacy: Nobody has a corner on the peanut crop, and there is no reason whatever why the price should be boosted.

SERIOUS FOREST FIRE IN NORTHWEST.

Sever drouth conditions in the Northwest have developed a forest fire situation so serious that the Forest Service is now spending, in Montana and northern Idaho, \$10,000 a day for fire-fighting and increased patrol. One large fire in the Kootenai National Forest in the northwestern corner of Montana, has engaged 300 fire-fighters and another force of 100 men is contending with a large fire in the Flathead Forest, in the same State. Dangerous conditions are reported also from Washington and Oregon.

In much of the Northwest the Forest Service reports state that no rain has fallen for weeks. As a result the forests are bone-dry. High winds are prevalent and the situation is said to parallel that of 1910, when forest fires caused a heavy loss of property and life.

Practically similar conditions are indicated by reports from Washington and Oregon. In the latter State many fires have already occurred and in the Crater National Forest several are said to be developing seriously.

The regular organization of the Forest Service is being supplemented by additional patrolmen in order to meet the emergency.

CLOVES PRESERVE APPLE.

Apples may come and apples may go, but this one goes on forever. This may be said of an apple

belonging to George M. Reade, 1751 Dayton avenue, St. Paul, Minn., which he picked from a tree in New York in 1868.

Mr. Reade lived on a farm in Cortland County, New York, when a boy. One day, just for amusement, he climbed one of his father's apple-trees, picked the largest apple he could find and stuck cloves in it.

It was merely an experiment, he said. He had heard of preserving apples by putting cloves in them, but thought it only a joke.

He gave the apple to his mother, and later when she died and some goods were shipped to him in Minnesota, the apple was found among them, sound and still fragrant from the spice.

"This apple," Mr. Reade said, "has been from New York to Dakota, and from Tennessee to Minnesota. It has always been exposed to the air."

Strange to say, unlike people and fruit, this apple does not decline in value or ability to stand age. It still is shiny and wholesome-looking as when Mr. Reade pulled it from his father's tree. Fifty years old, it still is fit for sale.

OLD SPANISH RELICS.

For the third time within the last four months workmen at Selvas de Verdugo (Verdugo Woodlands) have unearthed a relic of the old Spanish days.

While clearing a space under one of the large sycamore trees, Pedro Gomez, a laborer on the property, discovered an old Spanish necklace with gold crucifix attached, partly buried in the dirt at his feet. Inquiry was made of several of the "old-timers" in the Selvas de Verdugo district, but no clue to the owner of the necklace was found.

According to the word of Senor Frederic Verdugo, a member of the old Verdugo family to which was given the original grant of 37,000 acres, the "new-fangled" civilization of the Americanos was not cordially welcomed by the old Spanish inhabitants, who had lived rather primitive lives.

"As long as my father lived," said Senor Verdugo, "he would never ride on a street-car nor would he eat in a Los Angeles restaurant. Whenever he came to town it was my father's command that we drive in with our horse and buggy, and he always carried lunch with him which he would eat while we boys took our meals in a Los Angeles cafe. Those seemed to be two prejudices which he could not overcome."

Much of early Southern California history centers about these Verdugo hills. It was here under the picturesque "treaty oak" that the Spanish and American soldiers are said to have signed peace agreements when California was young.

GOLD PLATED COMBINATION SET.
Gold plated combination set, with turquoise stone. Price 10c. each by mail, postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn. N. Y.

JAPANESE MAGIC PAPER.



The latest, greatest and best little trick perfected by the ingenious Japanese is called Yaka Hula. It consists of two packages of specially prepared paper, one a sensitized medium, and the other a developing medium. The process of manufacture is a secret. By wetting a white sheet, and pressing a pink sheet on top of it, the white sheet will develop quaint photographic scenes, such as landscapes of Japan, portraits of Japanese characters, pictures of peculiar buildings, Gods, temples, etc. These pictures are replicas of actual photographs, and print up in a beautiful sepia brown color. Intensely interesting for both old and young. Price, 12c. per package, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

RUBBER TACKS.



They come six in a box. A wonderful imitation of the real tack. Made of rubber. The box in which they come is the ordinary tack box. This is a great parlor entertainer and you can play a lot of tricks with the tacks. Place them in the palm of your hand, point upward. Then slap the other hand over the tacks and it will seem as if you are committing suicide. Or you can show the tacks and then put them in your mouth and chew them, making believe you have swallowed them. Your friends will think you are a magician. Then, again, you can exhibit the tacks and then quickly push one in your cheek or somebody else's cheek and they will shriek with fear. Absolutely harmless and a very practical and funny joke. Price, by mail, 10c. a box of six tacks; 3 for 25c., postpaid.

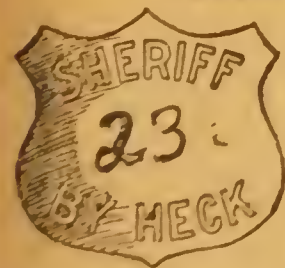
WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.



"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Recommended very highly. Price 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

SHERIFF BADGE.

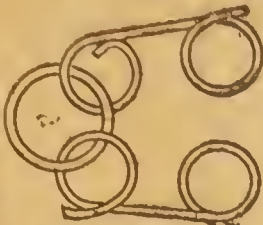


With this badge attached to your coat or vest you can show the boys that you are a sheriff, and if they don't behave themselves you might lock them up. It is a beautiful nickel-plated badge, 2 1/4 by 2 1/2 inches in size, with the words "Sheriff 23. By Heck"

in nickel letters on the face of it, with a pin on the back for attaching it to your clothing. Send for one and have some fun with the boys.

Price 15 cents, or 3 for 40 cents; sent by mail, postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn. N. Y.

DEVIL'S LOOK PUZZLE.



Without exception, this is the hardest one of all. And yet, if you have the directions you can very easily do it. It consists of a ring passed through two links on shafts. The shanks of this puzzle are always in the way. Get one and learn how to take the ring off. Price 15c. by mail, postpaid, with directions.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn. N. Y.

ELECTRIC CIGAR CASE.



This handsome cigar case appears to be filled with fine cigars. If your friend smokes ask him to have a cigar with you. As he reaches out for one the cigars, like a flash, instantly disappear into the case entirely out of sight, greatly to his surprise and astonishment. You can beg his pardon and state you

thought there were some cigars left in the case. A slight pressure on sides of case causes the cigars to disappear as if by magic. By touching a wire at bottom of case the cigars instantly appear again in their proper position in the case. As real tobacco is used they are sure to deceive any one. It is one of the best practical jokes of the season. A novelty with which you can have lots of fun.

Price 35 cents, sent by parcel post, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., N. Y.



MAGIC CARD BOX.—A very cleverly made box of exchanging or vanishing cards. In fact, any number of tricks of this character can be performed by it. A very necessary magical accessory. Price, 15c.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

LUCKY PENNY POCKET PIECE.



This handsome pocket piece is made of aluminum, resembling somewhat in size and appearance a silver dollar. In the center of the pocket piece is a new one-cent U. S. coin, inserted in such a way that it cannot be removed. (U. S. laws prevent our showing this coin in our engraving). On one side of the pocket piece are the words, "Lucky penny pocket piece; I bring good luck," and the design of a horseshoe. On the opposite side, "I am your mascot," "Keep me and never go broke," and two sprigs of four-leafed clover. These handsome pocket pieces are believed by many to be harbingers of good luck.

Price 12 cents; 3 for 30 cents; by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

THE BALANCING BIRD.



It measures more than four inches from tip to tip of wings, and will balance perfectly on the tip of your finger nail, on the point of a lead pencil, or on any pointed instrument, only the tip of the bill resting on the nail or pencil point, the whole body of the bird being suspended in the air with nothing to rest on. It will not fall off unless shaken off. A great novelty. Wonderful, amusing and instructive.

Price 10 cents, mailed postpaid.
WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

\$ 2 to \$500 EACH paid for hundreds of old Coins. Keep ALL money dated before 1895 and send Ten cents for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, size 4x7. It may mean your Fortune. CLARKE COIN Co., Box 95, Le Roy, N. Y.



BOYS LOOK AT ME Do you want to know how to flirt, tell stories girls like to hear, write real love letters and be a dandy fellow with the girls? Write quick for *Lovers Oasket* giving sample letters, and lots of other good things. All 10c
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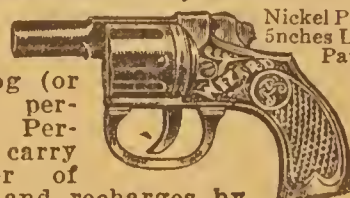
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Send for 25 XMAS PACKAGES. Each pack containing 48 assorted Xmas seals, Cards and Tags. Sell for 10c. each. When sold send us \$1.50 and keep \$1. We trust you.

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PARKER, STEARNS & CO.,
273 Georgia Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

PHANTOM CARDS.

From five cards three are mentally selected by any one, placed under an ordinary handkerchief, performer withdraws two cards, the ones not selected; the performer invites any one to remove the other two, and to the great astonishment of all they have actually disappeared. No sleight-of-hand. Recommended as the most ingenious card trick ever invented. Price 10c. by mail.

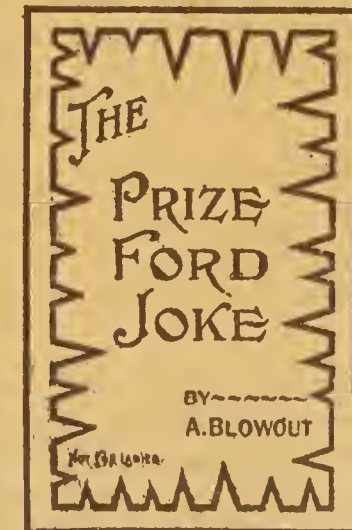
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LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.

The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c. one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

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Looks like a story-book, but it contains a cap and a trigger. The moment your innocent friend opens the book to read the interesting story he expects—Pop! Bang! The explosion is harmless, but will make him think the Germans are after him.

Price 35 cents each by mail, postpaid.

Wolff Novelty Co
168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

BLACK-EYE JOKE.

New and amusing joker. The victim is told to hold the tube close to his eye so as to exclude all light from the back, and then to remove the tube until pictures appear in the center. In trying to locate the pictures he will receive the finest black-eye you ever saw. We furnish a small box of blackening preparation with each tube, so the joke can be used indefinitely. Those not in the trick will be caught every time. Absolutely harmless. Price by mail 15c. each 3 for 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.

This one is a corker! Get a box right away, if you want to have a barrel of joy. Here's the secret: It looks like an ordinary red box of Turkish cigarettes. But it contains a trigger, under which you place a paper cap. Offer your friend a smoke and he raises the lid of the box. That explodes the cap, and if you are wise you will get out of sight with the box before he gets over thinking he was shot. Price 15c, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

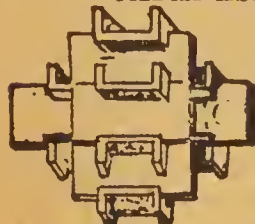
PAPEL BLANCO.



Four cards are placed in a hat. One card is removed and the balance are now shown to be changed to blank cards. The cards can be thoroughly examined. Price 10c, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

JAPANESE BANK PUZZLE.



Built up of a large number of grooved pieces of wood. Very difficult to take apart, and very difficult to put together. It can be so dissected as to make a bank of it and when re-assembled would defy the most ingenious bank burglar outside of prison. Price 35c, by mail, postpaid.

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THE MODERN DANCERS.



These dancers are set in a gilt frame, the size of our engraving. By lighting a match and moving it in circular form at the back they can be made to dance furiously, the heat from the match warming them up. If you want to see an up-to-date tango dance send for this pretty charm.

Price, 15 cents, or 3

for 40 cents, sent by mail, postpaid.
WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

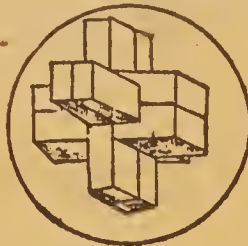


TOKIO CARD TRICK.

You place five cards in a hat. Remove one of them and then ask your audience how many remain. Upon examination the remaining four have vanished. A very clever trick. Price 10c, by mail, postpaid, with directions.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, New York City.

MIKADO BLOCK PUZZLE.



Imported from Japan. This neat little puzzle consists of six strangely cut pieces of white wood unassembled. The trick is to so assemble the blocks as to form a six-point cross. Price 12c, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



MONGOL PLAYING CARDS.

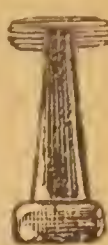
An exact imitation of a pack of the finest quality playing cards in a very neat case. You hand the package to your friend, requesting him to shuffle the cards, and as he attempts to do so a cap inside explodes loud enough to make him see stars. Price 25c, by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

IMITATION BED BUGS.

This toy is an exact imitation of the friendly little fellow who shares your bed, eats out of your hand or leg and who accepts your humble hospitality even without an invitation. The fact that he also insists on introducing all his friends and family circle, sometimes makes him most unpopular with the ladies; most every woman you know would have seven kinds of fits if she saw two, or even one, of these imitations on her bedspread. Six are contained in a transparent envelope. Price, 10c, by mail.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



THE JOKE SPIKE.

This joke spike is an ordinary iron spike or very large nail, the same as is found in any carpenter's nail box. At the small end is a small steel needle, 1/2 inch in length, firmly set in spike. Take your friend's hat or coat and hang it on the wall by driving (with a hammer) the spike through it into the wall; the needle in spike will not injure the hat or garment, neither will it show on wall or wood where it has been driven. The deception is perfect, as the spike appears to have been driven half-way through the hat or coat, which can be left hanging on the wall. Price, 10 cents, or 3 for 25 cents; by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

IMITATION GIANT DIAMONDS.



Diamond rings or studs of half-inch and one inch in diameter are heard of in stories only. We have them imitated by prodigious sparkling stones which will deceive the glance of any spectator. Price, by mail, postpaid, small size, 25c each; large size, 35c each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MAGIC MIRROR.



Fat and lean funny faces. By looking in these mirrors upright your features become narrow and elongated. Look into it sideways and your phiz broadens out in the most comical manner. Size 3 1/2 x 2 1/4 inches, in a handsome imitation morocco case.

Price, 10 cents each, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

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This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of a very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old. Price, ten cents by mail.

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